

**Submission
No 73**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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The Chairman. Andrew Gee MP

At present my wife and I can both drive and a trip to the Jindabyne area is not a problem . However, the time will come when we are going to have to rely on public transport to visit our family.

Travel does not present too much of a problem during the winter months. The private sector appears to offer good opportunities with a daily service from Sydney to the snowfields.

Travel to the Snowy River area can be undertaken by bus or train to Canberra, and then travelling by bus to Cooma. After Cooma there is no way to travel to Jindabyne and the surrounding area other than being collected by family members. Sometimes this will be not convenient for them. The only bus available runs on school days. To link these three transport systems together will take some juggling. May I invite the members of your committee to try it and return in a timely way, with luggage and the possible need to hitch hike.

The Snowy River Shire encompasses many visitor attractions and has no access to public transport. The population is about 8200. There is a High School and Boarding School at Jindabyne. There is no regular public transport for residents or students to visit Cooma or Canberra for medical, study or other resources not available at Jindabyne.

The issue opens up wider considerations. The loss of rail transport for passengers and freight to Cooma and beyond will probably never be restored. Once rail served the region well and probably would again with good organisation. Today, all goods and people must access the area by vehicle. Busy road traffic on sometimes inadequate road systems brings associated vehicle incidents. The area relies totally on private and commercial road transport for its existence.

Reliable Countrylink transport within the towns of the Snowy River Shire area with good and timely links to the major cities of Cooma and Canberra really should be available. The population and services of the region is expanding and the area deserves better. At least the matter needs to be studied. I am sure that there are offsets that could be made available.

I understand the NRMA has made submissions on the subject of changing demographics and the need for public transport for the aged population in regional communities. Please examine the requirement for Countrylink transport to Jindabyne and the surrounding area. It is unlikely to require considerable resources even in these lean times. Support of the private sector may be an answer.

My request is short of facts and figures on likely usage rates of such a service. I regret this but there must be a need when there is nothing in the first place, and from a small beginning the service may well grow and become a credit to Countrylink. How I get to Jindabyne in the forthcoming years is not the issue. I will manage. The issue is how other aged people get in and out of the area, and there will very likely be more of them. At the same time examine how the young that need to work or study in adjacent towns can be assisted.

Please look at this matter closely. Don't dismiss it, and at least go and look at the area and assess the transport support it needs.

David Blazey