

**Submission
No 63**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Name: Mr Sam Harris

Date Received: 16/05/2012

To: The NSW Parliamentary Committee for State and Regional Development

Re: Inquiry into Inter Regional Public Transport

Submission to Committee

I would like to submit that the NSW Government re-open ALL State owned rail lines and then tender/rent out the lines for private motor rail transport and goods transport.

The NSW rail network was essentially built by our forebears under the guidance of the great Mr Whitton. However, in recent years successive NSW Governments have simply closed down these vital transport arteries on spurious "cost" grounds. (Compare the cost of constant road maintenance to that of rail ballasting and non-electric line maintenance!!!)

So my suggestion is that the State invest in the re-ballasting and re-railing of the closed corridors with "Speno" machines and then offer the re-opened rail corridors for private "rental" use.

This would enable the State to re-vamp assets given to us by our far-sighted nineteenth century forebears and currently left disgracefully idle, disused and valueless and could/would be used to open up vast areas of NSW for specialty tourist, passenger and goods transport.

For example there are MANY closed corridors that only require the State to undertake the above maintenance investment and then "rent" the lines out for use. The result would be numerous private usages such as tourist motor/steam trains running on the Mudgee line, the Oberon line etcetera. An excellent tourist use could be steam trains running between Millthorpe and Oberon, or Mudgee and Lithgow, Sydney-Goulburn etcetera. The expensive damage done to the extremely poorly maintained NSW Road infrastructure could also be eased by using goods trains for more goods transport, why for example is the Oberon timber mill located right next to an extinct rail line, while the roads are deteriorating from constant timber truck usage?

As you all know the Central Tablelands and adjacent environs heavily promote their tourist attractions and enthusiastic steam train tourists would jump at the opportunity to travel on steam trains serving dinner or themed trips or even wedding receptions, for example between Millthorpe and Oberon or Mudgee via Lithgow, the route combinations could be almost endless. The recent History Channel series *Central Steam* sets out how such tourism has taken off in the UK
http://www.sanity.com.au/products/2210832/Central_Steam_E

The currently disused tracks could also provide vital regular small motor train passenger transport for example between Mudgee to Lithgow, Oberon to Bathurst/Lithgow Blayney to Orange, Orange to Dubbo etcetera. These short route trips could run regularly between stations as a viable alternative to the extremely irregular bus routes and would reduce road maintenance costs.

This all seems pretty much a no-brainer as the State already owns the rail corridors (used and closed) and could via some re-investment (ballast and track laying/maintenance) re-invigorate the invaluable rail infrastructure legacy bequeathed to us by Mr Whitton and the nineteenth and twentieth century NSW taxpayers.

Mrs Thatcher's UK Government undertook a leasing of the British rail infrastructure to the private sector in the 1980s and privately owned passenger goods and steam lines are now profitable.

I urge you to be far sighted in doing what Government was formed for, the provision to the taxpayers of long life useful publicly owned assets that assist the State's residents across the board.

Should the Committee wish to discuss this submission further please contact me.

Yours faithfully

(signed)

Samuel Harris

