

## **INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Organisation:** The Seer Resort Company  
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The Chair

State and Regional Development Committee

Parliament House, Macquarie St.

Sydney, 2000

**Re: Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport**

**Reference Area: Snowy River Shire**

The Snowy Mountains is the 4<sup>th</sup> most tourism business dependent region in Australia, and has a growing population that services the needs of this (Tourism Research Australia) and the Snowy River Shire is the most dependent on this within the mountains. With a growing population, and no Public transport, unlike other towns within the mountains, residents of the Snowy Shire are being both discriminated against and are being disadvantaged through this inaction.

In the past, reasons given for the lack of a service, being an unsealed road, are now negated with the completion of the sealing of this road, and with both a resident need as illustrated below, and to enable tourism growth in order to meet the NSW Governments 2020 vision I would strongly urge this committee to view favourably the implementation of a service to meet the needs of the residents and potential visitors to this shire.

Regards

Gary Grant

Director Research, Development and Marketing Strategies, The Seer Resort Company

## **With regards to the Terms of Reference:**

### **1. How Country Link Services can be improved**

By providing a service to the Snowy River Shire, located in southern NSW. As the Ando Road or Snowy River Way, is now sealed between Dalgety and Bombala, this would allow for an extension of the current service to provide a circuit route from Bombala or the far south coast to Dalgety, up to Jindabyne and back to Berridale before going on to Cooma. In the event of extreme weather in winter, buses can easily detour to Berridale from Dalgety and then on to Jindabyne. Our Shire is possibly the only Shire in NSW that is not serviced by a regular CountryLink service. We are currently completely bypassed with up to 14 services per week going through the neighbouring Bombala and Cooma shires. Reference 1 and 2

I would like the governments to understand that the area is about the needs of the local community as well as those of tourism and that we are not just requesting a tourism transport network.

By providing this service the following sectors of our community would benefit:

#### **HEALTH**

The provision of a service to the Snowy Shire would allow ease of access to medical services, which include hospitals and specialist medical services, provided in both Cooma and Canberra and also Sydney.

Attached is a copy of the submission that Snowy River Shire Council submitted to the CountryLinkUp enquiry which stated that the *"lack of transport choice impacts not only on residents but also businesses and visitors to the Region."* While the Community Transport is certainly a great service for the area, it is far from ideal for the population of the Shire who are unable to access this service because they are not covered by the health scheme.

#### **EDUCATION**

There are two K-12 schools serviced by school buses, but there is no service that would allow the high school students and those choosing to continue their education to attend University and TAFE courses that are offered outside of the normal school hours and outside our shire.

With the building of the Jindabyne Central School in 2006 which moved from a primary school to a primary and secondary school, this allowed local families to have their children educated closer to home, but there are still children who are boarding outside the area and a regular service would allow these children to return home for more visits.

The Department of Planning in 2006 estimated that there would only be a small percentage increase of under 18's, but that was before Jindabyne Central School was established and many local families were now able to send their children to the school. The school population has increased from 322 students in 2006 to 602 today with a seasonal intake over of the two winter terms of at least 10%. Reference 3

Snowy Mountains Grammar School offers boarding house facilities for students and has seen a 200% increase in enrolment in both the school and boarding house to current levels of 235 and 51 respectively over the last six years. Reference 3

SCEGGS Redlands also offers a winter campus for students with enrolments unknown.

With these increased enrolments our population has grown accordingly. Many of our families are single family units with no extended support network of other family members nearby. The only means for visitation is by private transport or travelling to Cooma to meet the current services or relying on private operators in our winter months with services that operate at their discretion.

Additionally the provision of a service would allow transport for our younger residents to take advantage of vocational and tertiary education in Cooma and Canberra, which at this time is not possible without private transport or relocation. This places an additional financial burden on individuals and families and breaks up the family unit, often taking away from the region a valuable seasonal resource for the tourism industry which has its peak periods coinciding with the various education institutions holiday periods. Alternatively given the financial burden of finding accommodation in order to take up further studies, many families and individuals are unable to do so, thus preventing any up-skilling and in some cases, creating a disenfranchised component who are unable to reach their potential and add to the economic worth of our communities, and in some cases retorting to anti-social behaviours.

## **ECONOMIC**

With no regular bus service within the Snowy Shire most families find it necessary to run two vehicles, which is a large expense to the family budget and high petrol costs add to this.

With employment available in Cooma and the district, a regular service would allow people to apply for jobs outside the region for full time year round employment and also travel to gain additional education and skills, making them a more valuable and productive workforce member.

The ABS in 2006 stated that there are 4744 families in the Shire and that one third of these families have parents or children who don't live at home on a permanent basis because employment and education is further away than a reasonable commute would allow. Reference 4

Employment during the winter season increases exponentially with up to 5000 seasonal staff employed, with no way to return to visit family and friends in their down times, other than private transport, which for many is non existent. A regular service for those commuting to jobs from the surrounding towns within the Snowy area is important

## **2. How Network Linkages between Country Link train and coach services can be improved**

Network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved by a reconfiguring of the timetable to include return travel and provide a bus service that would link up with selected arrivals and departures from Canberra and be at a time to maximise the potential for business and educational travel opportunities.

## **3. The Potential for Country Link Services to carry Light Freight**



With the increase in the number of people buying and selling online, there is the opportunity for local businesses to use the CountryLink service to carry light freight at competitive prices. Whilst there are several privately run freight operators providing a good service,, delivery outside of the peak winter period can be spasmodic dependant on loads and the addition of a regular service could assist in reducing the load of these businesses during the non winter months when the major resorts (and the major payers) are less dependent on goods from outside the region. This would assist in providing residents with a more reliable and timely service

#### **4. How Country Link can be better utilised to increase tourism in New South Wales**

The Snowy River Shire is one of the largest growing domestic tourist districts in New South Wales with tourism now exceeding agriculture/farming in local income. The NSW State Government has mandated that domestic tourism expenditure in NSW is to be doubled by the year 2020. Located only two hours south of our National Capital, the shire borders the Kosciuszko National Park, the only Alpine Area in NSW and location of our highest summit. Contained within the park are the four snow sports resorts.

The largest tourism activity within the Snowy Shire is the ski season, which runs from June to October each year. The ski season is the major economic contributor to the Snowy area, either by direct employment, small business income or associated businesses. directly and indirectly, 57 per cent of gross regional product and 51 per cent of total annual equivalent employment in the Snowy River Shire were

generated by the winter alpine resorts. The resorts are suffering from declining numbers and in studies undertaken by Tourism Snowy Mountains, access via public transport is cited as being one of the significant barriers to the growth of visitors, both in winter and non winter tourism seasons (**Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council**). In particular the lucrative backpacker market, which identifies this region as a major attractor, cannot get here because of this lack of public access. Reference 5

Just try and Google "how to get to Jindabyne" and the reply is DRIVE or catch the school bus and return to your days of being yelled at by the bus driver.

An integrated CountryLink service with the Snowy Shire would allow CountryLink Holidays to include many of the wonderful Spring/Summer events held in the area, refer TSM website - <http://www.snowymountains.com.au>, and would greatly improve access to international visitors.

#### **5. How the amount of inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport can be increased**

As our national capital is only two hours to our north with the large student populations in tertiary education many of whom are overseas students enormous potential exists to increase visitation to our region. In addition the inbound and domestic backpacker market is prevented from accessing the region in great numbers due to the lack of transport facilities

With many retirees now inhabiting our nearby coastal regions and reluctant to drive long distances or mountain roads potential for an increase in local domestic visitation also exists.

Increased domestic and international growth within our own “Snowy Mountains” region would be greatly enhanced by the ability to have access to the entire region not just by select segments.

**6. The extent to which regional public transport networks are integrated and how they can be better integrated**

An extension of the existing CountryLink ticket would be an integrated ticket that allowed use of the Cityrail network as well as linking with bus services between the capital cities and Canberra.

VLine currently have a bus service that runs through Cooma and CountryLink may be able to partner with them to increase services for our region.

**7. The role local councils can play in improving inter-regional public transportation networks**

I understand that the Snowy River Shire Council is also doing a submission and I as a member of this community support the Council in their submission.

**8. The type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future.**

Normal buses and those with wheel chair access would provide the necessary service.

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## References

1 [http://www.countrylink.info/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/13810/SouthernRegion.pdf](http://www.countrylink.info/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/13810/SouthernRegion.pdf)

2 [http://www.vline.com.au/pdf/timetables/canberra\\_via\\_sale.pdf/canberra\\_via\\_sale](http://www.vline.com.au/pdf/timetables/canberra_via_sale.pdf/canberra_via_sale)

3 Sourced from principals or administration staff at both schools

4 <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@nrrp.nsf/Latestproducts/145207050Population/People12006-2010?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=145207050&issue=2006-2010>

5 [http://www.snowyriver.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community\\_Profile](http://www.snowyriver.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community_Profile) industry employment and the workforce. Last update date unknown but based on community profile 2004 -2009

6. The Economic Significance of the Australian Alpine Resorts Prepared for: Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council

With:

Australian Ski Areas Association

NSW Department of Environment and Conservation

NSW Department of Planning

Parks Victoria

Victorian Alpine Resort Management Boards

Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

By the

National Institute of Economic and Industry Research

7. The Economic Importance of Tourism in Australia's Regions – Tourism research Australia