

**Submission
No 76**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Name: Name Suppressed

Date Received: 18/05/2012

Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport

Issues for consideration

How CountryLink services can be improved and inter-regional travel by public transport can be increased.

The Snowy River LGA is currently not serviced by CountryLink. Our local government area falls outside of the transport link between Canberra and Eden, this CountryLink route encompasses our closest city, Canberra, our largest nearby town, Cooma and the south coast of NSW. We are therefore without a regular, reliable and most importantly, affordable transport network and are disconnected from major services and infrastructure.

The communities, businesses and people of the Snowy River LGA have been lobbying since 2008 for an extension of the current CountryLink route between Canberra and Eden to include a loop through the Snowy River Shire.

As a local resident I believe our district needs to become connected, there are a number of small rural towns with small populations and a lack of local facilities including medical, education, retail and community services. Most importantly an affordable public transport option would benefit young people aged between 15-24yrs, who are represented heavily in the Jindabyne area, considerably higher than the average population % breakdown for NSW.

How CountryLink can be better utilised to increase Tourism in New South Wales

The Snowy River area includes 2 of the largest Australian ski resorts which attract domestic and international travellers as well as a seasonal workforce throughout the ski season months of June - October.

As the manager of Thredbo YHA, I have seen a decline of 8.5% since 2008 in overnights from international backpackers. I would attribute most of this decline to the cessation of regular transport outside of ski season in October 2008. The loss of any business outside of our peak tourism period of winter, impacts heavily on our region. Businesses in the Snowy Mountains struggle to be viable year round and tourism is the main source of income for many local residents.

For those travellers coming to our region outside of the ski season, to enjoy the many attractions in the Australian Alps, there are very few convenient and affordable transport options beyond Cooma. To find information on transport links and make travel arrangements is almost impossible based on feedback we receive from potential visitors and guests who do manage to arrive in Thredbo.

A CountryLink service which would include Jindabyne would greatly benefit the tourist resorts of the Snowy Mountains, there is a strong sense that a local operator could pick up the final transport link from Jindabyne into the mountains.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of transport to and through our region, it has become the norm for young people and backpackers to hitchhike through the Snowy River Shire. This raises the significant issue of safety, we know that hitchhiking is not encouraged as a means of transport in Australia but without identifiable alternatives, travellers do and will resort to using it as a way to get around.

What we are asking for, at the very least is a CountryLink connection between Cooma and Jindabyne, incorporating the smaller towns of Berridale and Dalgety.