

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Submission for State and Regional Development Committee into inter-regional transport improvements.

We are current operators of the following Countrylink Services:

- * Dubbo - Broken Hill - Dubbo
- * Dubbo - Bourke - Dubbo
- * Coolabah - Brewarrina - Coolabah
- * Dubbo - Lightning Ridge - Dubbo
- * Dubbo - Cootamundra - Bathurst - Dubbo
- * Dubbo - Lithgow - Dubbo - Nyngan - Dubbo.

1. Countrylink services could be improved by providing a better road network. This would create a safer, smoother journey. XPT trains need to be replaced with faster, modern and more reliable trains. Trains are an integral part of the network.
2. Network linkages can be improved by providing more staff at interchange points in peak periods. Customer service and assistance would improve.
3. Light freight on Countrylink Coach Services is not an option. With wheelchair hoists and passenger luggage, space is limited. Current timetables do not allow time for freight transactions or movements. Countrylink coaches should concentrate on their core business and carry passengers.
4. Tourism could be increased on Countrylink Services with better marketing and promotion for coaches as well as train services.
5. Inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport could be increased by providing better services from villages to regional centre transport hubs.
6. GPS monitoring and real-time on board manifests would improve coach services. This would help to maximise all available capacity and improve customer satisfaction.
7. Local councils need to work closer with state government and improve passenger facilities provided. They need to be proactive in seeking funding for bus shelters, better lighting and disabled access facilities.
8. NSW needs to look outside the box at other successful models for transport improvement, compared with Europe we are 20 years behind.
9. Upgraded tracks and faster trains need to be on the agenda.
10. Countrylink coaches need to be GPS monitored. This is included in the current contract, but to date Countrylink Management have yet to decide on the preferred option.
11. Australian bus body builders should be encouraged and assisted. Cheaper imports from China etc are not of the same quality and not built for Australian conditions. Import tariffs could be imposed to create more parity and make Australian suppliers more competitive. Emission control standards are improving, however this can add to vehicle weight. Technology is becoming cheaper and passenger comfort could be improved by taking advantage of advances such as wireless internet and on board entertainment.
12. Reversing the Dubbo XPT timetable has been discussed. This would be fine for passengers living closer to Sydney in centres such as Orange and Bathurst. These centres are already well catered for. Passengers living west of Dubbo have fewer options and would be disadvantaged with unrealistic departure times from Western Regional Communities. Eg Lightning Ridge passengers would have to leave Lightning Ridge at 1.30 am to connect with a 7.10 am Sydney bound XPT. Passengers from Bourke, Broken Hill, Brewarrina etc would be similarly affected. No options for meal breaks with everything closed. Increased likelihood of collisions with feral animals and driver fatigue

are also factors to consider. Perhaps a more frequent rail/motor coach shuttle service between Orange, Bathurst and Lithgow City Rail connections would be a more feasible option.

13. The majority of passengers travelling on Countrylink coach services linked to Dubbo are:
 - * People who are transport disadvantaged
 - * People accessing Dubbo and beyond for medical services
 - * People from the lower end of the socio-economic scale - people on Centrelink benefits
 - * A high proportion of Indigenous people
14. No service currently available between Dubbo and Tamworth. Connections could be made ex-Dubbo with North Western XPT services between Armidale , Hunter Valley and Sydney.
15. All Countrylink services linked to Dubbo are well patronised.

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