



NEW SOUTH WALES

MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING
MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

The Hon. J A Gardiner MLC
Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Legislative Council
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Y04/2017

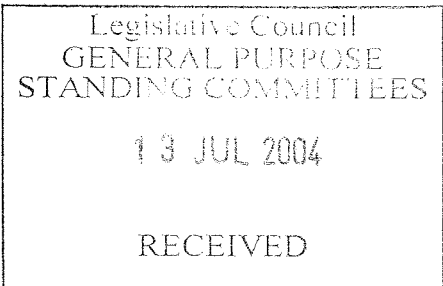
Dear Chair

I refer to the Committee's letter of 5 July to Mr Stephen Alchin, Executive Director, Transport Planning Division of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources concerning Questions on Notice from the 2 July public hearing of the Inquiry into the Closure of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Service.

Please find attached answers to the 15 questions.

Yours sincerely

Michael Egan MLC
Acting Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
Acting Minister for Natural Resources



INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OF CASINO TO MURWILLUMBAH RAIL SERVICES

Questions taken on notice by Mr Alchin during the Legislative Council hearing on 2 July 2004

1. The Chair asked Mr Alchin: Would you provide the Committee with DIPNR's population statistics for the North Coast, and indicate how they relate to the statewide picture? (Hansard, page 3)

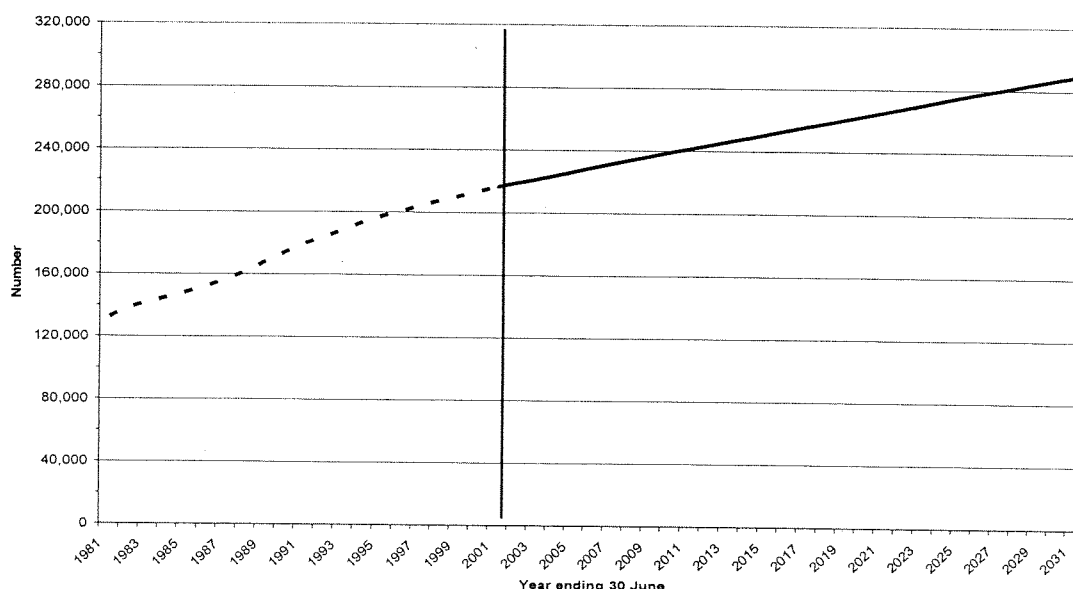
DIPNR response:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines the Richmond-Tweed region as the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed. The 'North Coast' extends south as far as the Hastings. As the Committee is focusing on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, this answer restricts itself to the ABS Richmond-Tweed region.

Population change over time

- The population of Richmond-Tweed is projected to grow from 216,300 in 2001 to 289,300 in 2031, an increase of 73,000 or 34 per cent over 30 years.
- Richmond-Tweed's population is projected to grow by considerably less than in the previous 20 years. Between 1981 and 2001, the region grew by 84,000 people. By 2021, the population is expected to grow by a further 49,000 people to 265,500.
- In 2001 the population of Richmond-Tweed made up 3.3 per cent of all people living in New South Wales, compared with 2.5 per cent 20 years earlier. By 2031 the Richmond-Tweed population is forecast to make up 3.5 per cent of all people living in the State.

Figure 1 Actual and Projected Population, Richmond-Tweed, 1981-2031



- In the 20 year period 1981-2001 the average annual growth rate for Richmond-Tweed was 2.5 per cent. Between 1996 and 2001 annual growth averaged 1.5 per cent.
- The average annual rate of growth for Richmond-Tweed is expected to slow over the next 30 years. The annual rate of change between 2001 and 2006 is projected to be 1.1 per cent. By the period 2026-31, the annual growth rate is expected to have slowed to 0.8 per cent.
- Historic growth rates in Richmond-Tweed have been higher than for New South Wales as a whole and among the highest regional growth rates in the State. Projected growth rates for Richmond-Tweed are expected to remain higher than for New South Wales as a whole.

Table 2: Historic and Projected Population and Average Annual Growth Rates, Richmond-Tweed and NSW, 1981-2031

Year ending 30 June	Population ^(a) (Number)	Average annual growth rate (Percent) ^(b)	
		Richmond-Tweed	NSW
1981	132,350		
1986	151,900	2.79	1.11
1991	179,500	3.40	1.29
1996	200,500	2.24	1.02
2001	216,300	1.53	1.17
2006	228,900	1.14	0.88
2011	241,300	1.06	0.85
2016	253,300	0.97	0.79
2021	265,500	0.94	0.75
2026	277,700	0.90	0.71
2031	289,300	0.82	0.64

^(a) Populations for 1981-2001 are actual, populations for years after 2001 are projected.

^(b) Growth rates are an annual average of the 5-year period ending at the year shown in the first column.

Sources:

DIPNR (2004) NSW State and Regional Population Projections 2001-2051.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, estimated resident population at 30 June.

- 2. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: How many officers of NIPNR are on the Far North Coast Planning Project Control Group? (Hansard, page 4)**

DIPNR response:

DIPNR initially established a group of nine (9) senior officers to develop a North Coast Strategy for the region from Newcastle to the Queensland border. After two meetings it agreed it should consider the entire NSW coast and became known as the NSW Coastal Strategy Project Committee. Membership expanded to fourteen (14) to cover the expanded geographical area. It will supervise the preparation of five regional strategies, including for the Far North Coast.

- 3. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Was the first meeting of the Far North Coast Planning Project Control Group prior to the 6 April Mini Budget? (Hansard, page 4)**

DIPNR response:

Yes, the then North Coast Strategy Flagship Project committee first met on 30 March 2004.

4. **Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Is it possible for the Committee to be provided with an indication of the work and the direction of the Far North Coast Planning Project Control Group? (Hansard, page 5)**

DIPNR response:

Although detailed assessment work has not yet started, the purpose of the Coastal Project Strategy Committee, which oversees development of a Far North Coast Strategy, is to protect the coastal environment while accommodating the population pressures expected in the next three decades. It seeks sustainable development in livable communities where expenditure on necessary infrastructure is made in the right location at the time it is needed.

5. **Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked Mr Alchin: When did the work of the Far North Coast Planning Project Control Group start? (Hansard, page 5)**

DIPNR response:

The DIPNR North Coast regional office is responsible for work on the Far North Coast Strategy as directed by the NSW Coastal Strategy Project Committee. The Regional Office prepared a draft Project Scoping Brief in June 2004 and is now in the process of engaging the six Local Governments. Formal work will commence when these governance arrangements are in place.

6. **Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked Mr Alchin: Was anyone working on the Far North Coast Planning Project Control Group prior to and after the 6 April Mini Budget? (Hansard, page 5)**

DIPNR response:

Several DIPNR officers in Sydney and regional locations were doing preliminary work on the NSW Coastal Strategy Project Committee prior to 6 April.

After that date, various DIPNR officers were involved in administrative tasks and general scoping of the project and the regional strategies. Formal work is due to commence on the strategies within the next month.

7. **Mr Oldfield asked Mr Alchin: When do you expect a DIPNR transport plan for the Northern Rivers region to be finished? (Hansard, page 7)**

DIPNR response:

The draft scoping brief for the Far North Coast Strategy schedules a final report by mid 2005. This final report will deal with transport in the region. In keeping with the Department's agenda to integrate planning, there will be no stand alone DIPNR transport plan for the Northern Rivers region.

- 8. Mr Oldfield asked Mr Alchin: When was a DIPNR transport plan for the Northern Rivers region first requested? (Hansard, page 7)**

DIPNR response:

There was no specific request for a DIPNR transport plan for the Northern Rivers Region.

As some regional Local Governments agreed in preliminary discussions that transport and access should be addressed as part of integrated infrastructure provision, the Coastal Project Strategy Committee will consider overall infrastructure needs of the region, including rail transport, as part of the Far North Coast Regional Strategy.

- 9. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Have you a profile of the transport needs of residents accessing Ballina, Tweed Heads, Byron, Kyogle and Lismore? (Hansard, pages 7-8)**

DIPNR response:

Apart from noting that there was an average of 184 rail passenger journeys each day between Casino and Murwillumbah in 2002-03, DIPNR does not have a recent profile of the transport needs of these residents. As part of its development of an integrated regional strategy, DIPNR will check for information in studies prepared in the mid 1990s and earlier.

- 10. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Have you any local transport information for the Northern Rivers Region that you could brief the Committee on? (Hansard, page 8)**

DIPNR response:

DIPNR attaches Town Reports for the 37 villages, towns or regional centres in the ABS Richmond-Tweed area with a population of 200 people or more. They are grouped according to the six local government areas.

DIPNR is in the process of updating these reports with more recent census and service data.

- 11. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Can you describe the demand for transport to Brisbane from the Northern Rivers region? (Hansard, page 9)**

DIPNR response:

Most of the Northern Rivers region is within 3 hours travel of the south-east Queensland economic region which has international air passenger and sea freight links and is the third largest and fastest growing region of the Australian economy.

The overwhelming majority of current passenger and freight trips are by road. RTA traffic counts show there to be 17,500 vehicles each weekday and 16,000 on weekend days in both directions over the NSW/Queensland border at Tweed Heads.

The 2001 census indicated that approximately 4,300 people from Tweed Shire (20% of the Tweed resident workforce) work in the Gold Coast.

- 12. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Is there an opportunity for a successful commuter service on the Casino to Murwillumbah line? (Hansard, page 13)**

DIPNR response:

If 'success' is measured in terms of financial viability, then the answer is no. While DIPNR has done no detailed study, patronage revenue in the region could not cover the rail corridor maintenance and operational costs involved, especially without freight movements to subsidise passenger services.

- 13. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Has DIPNR been consulted about the terms of reference and work of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Corridor Working Party? (Hansard, page 14)**

DIPNR response:

The Terms of Reference arose from a meeting between the Minister for Transport Services, The Hon. Michael Costa, and the Member for Tweed, Neville Newell, Member for Lismore, Thomas George, The Hon. Ian Cohen, the Mayor of Lismore, Merv King, The Mayor of Richmond Valley, Charlie Cox, the Mayor of Tweed, Warren Polglase, and other discussions with the Member for Ballina, Don Page.

The Chair of the Working Party, John Whelan, Ministry of Transport Director of Local and Community Transport, has had discussions with DIPNR to ensure it will be represented.

- 14. Ms Cusack asked Mr Alchin: Can local councils in the Northern Rivers region make formal submissions to DIPNR and have their views incorporated into DIPNR planning for the region? (Hansard, pages 14-15)**

DIPNR response:

DIPNR intends that the six North Coast Local Governments and Rous County Council will be partners in developing the Regional Strategy, including its transport component.

On 4 February 2004, DIPNR held a preliminary workshop with most of the councils attending.

DIPNR is in the process of briefing the Mayors and General Managers of all six Local Governments on the project and discussing their participation.

As partners in the process, Local Governments will be directly participating in development of the Regional Strategy. If they still thought it necessary, they could also make formal submissions.

15. Me Oldfield asked Mr Alchin: Was DIPNR consulted in relation to the closure of the Casino to Murwillumbah line along with the Ministry of Transport? (Hansard, page 15)

DIPNR response:

While the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service has been discontinued, the line has not closed.

DIPNR was not consulted about this operational decision to substitute coach services for rail services in the corridor.