

**Submission
No 118**

**INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OF CASINO TO
MURWILLUMBAH RAIL SERVICES**

Organisation: Lismore City Council
Name: Mr Warren Rackham
Telephone:
Date Received: 03/06/2004

Subject:

Summary

GPSC4 GPSC4 - Submission ~ GPSC No 4, Murwillumbah Rail Line Closure

From: "Warren Rackham" <Warren.Rackham@lismore.nsw.gov.au>
To: <gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 3/06/2004 1:33 PM
Subject: Submission ~ GPSC No 4, Murwillumbah Rail Line Closure

The Director, GPSC No 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY 2000

Please find attached my submission in respect of the Murwillumbah Rail Line closure,
for consideration at the Inquiry.

Thank you
Warren Rackham
Maclean NSW 2463

<<THE DIRECTOR.doc>>

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender immediately and delete this email. Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Lismore City Council. Finally, the recipient should check this email and any attachments for the presence of viruses. Lismore City Council accepts no liability for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this email.

Lismore City Council, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah NSW Australia 2480
www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

2 June 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

ENQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OF CASINO TO MURWILLUMBAH RAIL SERVICES

I wish to add my strong objections to the recent premature closure of the Murwillumbah branch rail line by the NSW Government, and advance the following issues in support of these:

- 1 In May 1990 I was one of a number of persons who made a submission to the Grafton sitting of the North Coast Rail Review series of public hearings into the future of sleeper, Motorail, dining car services and locomotive hauled trains to Northern NSW. At that time substantial cuts were being foreshadowed to North Coast services and timetables, and there was intense public debate against the loss of scheduled rail services, amenity and service. In spite of severe threats to these services at the time, thankfully a reasonable outcome prevailed, and resulted in the new 'Holiday Coast' XPT service being introduced to the Murwillumbah run.
- 2 Although the single train daily to Murwillumbah did not provide any daylight service, at least it was (and has continued to be) well patronised, contrary to more recent statements from Transport Minister Costa. On the 3 trips I have had (and as a full fare paying passenger) in the past 4 months, the train was more than 3/4 full right to Murwillumbah on each occasion. Heavy patronisation of the train was also fully confirmed by the carriage attendant on one of these trips, when she could not understand why the service was being axed, and clearly advised that "this is one of the most patronised journeys on the rail system".
- 3 Mr Costa, who has hurriedly removed our train from the community, most probably doesn't use trains, and certainly not country services. Whilst it must be recognised that trains do not run at a profit (and neither do other public functions - such as hospitals and schools) - they have been providing a PUBLIC SERVICE for over 150 years. They are not a playtoy to be chopped and changed at politician's whims, budgetary or otherwise.
- 4 Outside of the Sydney area the Tweed-Byron-Gold Coast area is by far the most popular holiday coastline destination on the whole of Australia's coast. Queensland once had a rail line to Coolangatta until 1960, they removed it - and are now busily putting it back. We have (had?) a line perfectly capable of being extended and linked through to Qld and tapping this enormous tourism travel, but ... what do we do in NSW?? ~ an incredibly stupid and shortsighted action, to say the least.

5 Letting the condition of the line run down over the years and then claiming it is too costly to fix it is just simply not acceptable as a reason. That's nothing short of negligence. People in this area have been saying for years "I bet the government will just let the line run down as an excuse to close it". So true.

6 Nobody wants more transport on our already seriously substandard North Coast roads - more buses full of people does not compute - here we are talking about the problems with North Coast roads, pollution, the great trucking problem on the highways, Pacific Highway upgrades and deviations. Yet Mr Costa seems to think that there's no problem with adding more buses to the melee. I wonder if he has heard of the Cowper and Clybucca tragedies - Australia's two worst road accidents EVER - and they were both North Coast, and both involved buses.

7 Road damage - we all know that heavy vehicles cause infinitely greater damage to our roads than cars; do we save a few dollars on scrapping the train and spend the money on fixing the roads? Is this logic?

8 One must also question the efficiencies of using buses which still must be required to link with the train now terminated at Casino. Quite apart from the additional discomfort to travelling patrons who have to undertake the transfer, what delays can very easily now occur in making that link - with intermittent road delays/holdups for any number of reasons which occur, the linking and transfer timings will invariably result in rail delays. It is also a bad combination for the elderly, the disabled, those with children. As an additional aside, I also strongly suspect that the Casino termination may well soon be shortened to Grafton in order to make for further economies, based on short runs by Grafton crews now to only Casino and return.

9 Without trying to be political in any way, it must be said that the current Government is just not listening to the wishes of the North Coast people, in spite of promises and guarantees given. Local Minister Kelly told us that 'there would be no forced amalgamation of (Clarence Valley) councils, and yet forthwith followed through and did just that. Hot on his heels, Mr Costa advised us that there would be no immediate closure of the Murwillumbah branch! It is clear that country people, their wishes, and what's left of their public services are treated with disdain and contempt.

We asked - pleaded - begged for our train to remain, but the government has ridden roughshod over the wishes of the people here.

10 Lastly, and very importantly, I wonder how many people know that the Murwillumbah to Casino line was the first rail line constructed on the whole of the North Coast - long before rails branched off the Great Northern Railway at Maitland. The branch line is really Railway Heritage, but then that aspect has also been overlooked here. Now laid to rest on a politician's whim.

I'm sure there are other issues too, and that the concerns I have expressed above will be expanded upon by others. The premature and unjustified closing of this most valuable public service and asset must be reversed. I hope that common sense and rationale will prevail.

Thank you for the opportunity to be able to make a submission in the matter to you.

Yours faithfully

Warren Rackham
Maclean
2nd June 2004