

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

Organisation: Combined Pensioners and Superannuats Association Lismore,
Incorporated
Name: Mr Gordon Moody
Position: Member
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Date Received: 28/05/2004

Subject

Summary

**Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association
Lismore, Incorporated.**

**Honorary Secretary, (Mrs.) Helen McBain,
1/45 Woodland Avenue,
Lismore Heights NSW. 2480
Tel. (02) 66 243 646**

28th. May, 2004

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission re Closure of Casino – Murwillumbah Rail Branch line.

On behalf of the Members of this Association we make the following submissions in respect of the published Terms of Reference.

Item A.

It is a paradox that a saving estimated at \$5 million per year would be miniscule compared with the losses also incurred with the provision of the Sydney and probably the Newcastle metropolitan rail services. Could it not (in the absence of detailed figures) be also construed that the Sutherland/Cronulla, Clyde/Carlingford and Blacktown/Richmond branch lines be also shut down?

In past years the provision of passenger rail services (under various managements, NSWGR, State Rail etc.) was managed with rail motor/light rail services in recognition of a public service being provided (including Sutherland/Waterfall and even into Rookwood Cemetery).

To alleviate the inconvenience of the presently discontinued service this community is very much desirous of the restoration of the service and additionally a frequent light rail commuter service being introduced with a more convenient scheduling. A recent Letters to the Editor writer recalled the service of the earlier North Coast Mail which enabled youth in particular to join the train from Lismore, spend many hours at the beach (Byron Bay) and return home on the evening southbound returning service to Sydney. Students attending the University at Lismore would be potential commuters where a timetabling could be arranged to coincide with their studies.

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Previous submissions to forestall the present closure also highlighted that whilst being appreciative of the removal of the \$10 service fee previously associated with Pensioner Voucher Travel, the members of this Association agreed they would not object to its reintroduction.

It was estimated the service was foregoing an estimated \$2000 per journey with the abolition of this charge. At say \$2000 per journey x 2 (forward and return journeys) x 7 days would amount to \$28000 per week on this Sydney-Murwillumbah service in foregone revenue. Further, \$28000 divided by 7 and times 365 days equates to \$1,460,000 per annum on this one train service.

Part B

The inclusion of Social impacts in this part of the submission is perceived to indicate awareness of the consequences of the reduction of the local rail services and it is pleasing that a temporary reprieve is in place pending the outcome of this enquiry.

It is believed the present rail link Casino to Lismore remains viable and in view of Lismore City being a major Regional Centre the retention of rail services is paramount. Additionally, in times of major flood conditions the rail service is often the only reliable link to other centres.

In respect of the City of Lismore a problem has already arisen in respect of a suitable Coach Terminal for arriving and departing passengers. The retention of the local CountryLink Travel Centre at the Lismore Railway Station opens the possibility for further development as a long distance bus transit station with the available parking and service facilities associated with both facilities.

Naturally we are concerned at the loss of employment of local staff. The Lismore community holds these employees in high esteem and this Association expresses the hope of their retention bearing in mind the flow on effects of stability of employment, their families, housing commitments, limited employment opportunities, and the injection of wages paid into the community supporting the local economy.

It is noted that State Rail has invested considerable money into the provision of access facilities for the disabled to travel on the CountryLink services, e.g., ramps for wheelchair access into the carriage and toilet access. It is of common concern the discriminatory effects and limitations which will arise upon the removal of these services were they to be replaced with coach services.

Part C

This Association, representing a large portion of the community, affirms that the existing infrastructure belongs to the people of New South Wales and must be retained.

Whilst this Association remains politically neutral, the barrage of correspondence in the Northern Star Lismore and other local newspapers reflects the community feeling in respect of the perceived neglect of this valued infrastructure and its future potential linking the Capital cities of Sydney and Brisbane.

Planning should be instituted without delay for its complete restoration and upgrading with a view to facilitating a future link to the Queensland Border. The existing rail corridor must be retained and opportunity taken to realign the track with a view to reducing maintenance costs and to reduce traveling times.

Part D

This north coast region of NSW is recognised as the fastest population growth area of the State outside of the metropolitan areas.

This Association asserts that the continuing growth must be taken into account in Regional Planning and this to include the continued maintenance and upgrading of the rail infrastructure.

In conclusion, we ask is that equal consideration and provision of rail and other Public Services be provided as is given to and expected by the populations of the major metropolitan areas.

The signatories will be available at the forthcoming Inquiry on 9 June at Lismore to support this submission if required.

Yours faithfully,

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On behalf of Helen McBain

Honorary Secretary, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association Lismore, Inc.