

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

**Organisation:** Tweed Valley Branch of Blind Citizens Australia  
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**Subject:**

**Summary**

**BLIND CITIZENS AUSTRALIA INC.  
TWEED VALLEY BRANCH  
SUBMISSION TO NEW SOUTH WALES  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO  
THE XPT SERVICE CASINO, MURWILLUMBAH  
RAIL SERVICE**

Dear Sir or madam,

The Tweed Valley Branch of Blind Citizens Australia Inc. appreciates this opportunity to make comment on the closure of the XPT Rail Service between Casino and Murwillumbah.

We apologise for not presenting our comments earlier, we have only just become aware of the Legislative Council Enquiry, we were only informed on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004 that we had an opportunity to present our comments.

Transport is a major component of the lifestyle of people with disabilities it provides access to services and social interaction with the general community.

With the cancellation of the Rail service between Murwillumbah and Casino not only denies people with disabilities access to an accessible mode of transport it also denies them freedom of choice as to which mode of transport they use, primary because of other transport services not having accessibility.

We were of the opinion that the XPT Service would continue for at least 12 months which would have allowed more time for Coach Services to upgrade their fleet to comply with the public transport disability access standards.

Not only was the XPT Rail Service convenient and accessible for people with a mobility disability, the onboard and station staff were only willing to assist legally blind people whilst travelling.

**TOILET AND BATHROOM ACCESS.**

Not only people with a disability require access to user friendly toilet facilities so do older people who are suffering from incontinent problems Mothers with babies require a change tables and facilities to sponge wash

their infants all these facilities were available on the XPT Train they are not available on the buses, where toilets are available on the buses they are not accessible for wheelchair users and the drivers often advise passengers only to use the toilet facilities in an emergency situation..

Our major concern is that whilst the Government has provided Coaches to transport passengers from the southern end of the Gold Coast and Tweed down to Casino to connect with the XPT Service to Sydney, people with a disability will not be able to receive the same level of assistance as they used to from the rail staff, the Coaches have only one staff member which is the driver who is unable to cater for all the needs on an individual basis of his passengers.

The cancellation of the XPT Rail Service from Casino to Murwillumbah will have a major impact on tourists travelling to the Far North Coast of NSW and the Gold Coast, this will have a flow on to the Commercial and employment sector in these areas.

Both the Tweed and the Gold Coast are experiencing high population growth which has a high portion of people with disabilities and low fixed income.

Adding buses onto the already cluttered road network is not only increasing the pollution levels in our environment that is also placing peoples lives at risk because of the ever increasing amount of road crashes.

The public transport in this area is minimal and expensive, the rail corridor is an asset owned by the public of NSW and it should be for a regional commuter service.

Millions of dollars have recently been spent on upgrading this line and stations. Yet now the Government claims it is not viable. This makes no sense.

The Government cites failing passenger numbers, yet at times the service is booked out, and intending passengers are sometimes turned away.

How does the Transport Minister intend dressing the passenger demand in peak holiday periods without increasing the size of the train between Casino and Sydney, it is our understanding that the present service does

not have the capacity to cater for this demand, we recommend that the Transport Minister and the NSW Government as a whole not only reconsider their decision to cancel the service between Casino and Murwillumbah but they should also include giving consideration to extending the service into Queensland which would enable passengers to connect with the Gold Coast Electric Train service this would speed up the travel time between the two Capital Cities.

The above comments have been provided by William (Bill) McKennariey Vice President and External Representative of Blind Citizens Australia Tweed Valley Branch.

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Dated Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2004