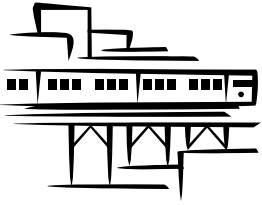


**Submission
No 6**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Rail Action Bathurst

Date received: 12/08/2011



Rail Action Bathurst

Mr John Hollis
Chair
Rail Action Bathurst

RAIL ACTION BATHURST SUBMISSION

TO

INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

The affirmative action of the Coalition State Government to form Infrastructure NSW demonstrates the recognition that infrastructure in NSW needs a substantial overhaul and redeveloping.

Regional Rail Services (freight and passenger) have been severely cut back over many years. The services have been largely replaced by bus services which have proven to be effective for remote and small communities but cumbersome and inconvenient for the larger communities such as Bathurst. A community survey carried out by Countrylink in October 2010 revealed that many of the larger regional areas were asking for better rail links to major centres such as Sydney and Canberra.

In 1995 the then State Member for Bathurst (Mick Clough) stated in Parliament that **“his greatest concern is the lack of a return daily rail service from Bathurst to Sydney”**.

The objective of the Rail Action Bathurst (**RAB**) is to bring to the notice of the NSW Government the dissatisfaction of the Bathurst Community with a totally inadequate Rail Service to Bathurst, and the need to provide an additional CityRail Daily return express rail service from Bathurst to Sydney.

The Bathurst Community is highly desirous of a range of good quality and accessible transport options. This was well highlighted in a recent Community Survey by Bathurst Regional Council in February 2010. Also a petition done by RAB in January 2008 where 8000 signatures were recorded in support of the Rail Service and the Community Survey carried out by RAB in August 2009 which showed that only 33.7% of travellers used the existing rail services because of the Coach/Train transfer at Lithgow, the Timetable, the Travel Time and unsatisfactory Booking Process.

The present services are not “all about the customer”.

Rail Action Bathurst has recognised how important that patronage is as one of the prime criteria when considering whether a service is provided or not. The responsibility of this is two fold:

- A) The service provided must be a quality one that addresses the needs for the service
- B) The Bathurst Community and Regional Council continue to be progressive and promote the growth of the region and the rail service.

The Bathurst Region is a hot spot for business. The city and surrounding region offers new and established business a strong and dynamic economic environment which is ideal for growth and expansion. Bathurst has affordable property, sound infrastructure, sustainable water supply, skilled workforce and resident population that is one of the fastest growing in regional NSW. The regions' proximity to Sydney and strong business networks and transport infrastructure increase the regions' export potential.

Bathurst Regional Council has an established "Economic Development Section" which is responsive to the business needs of the Region. Broadening the economic base of the region through investment attraction strategies and industry development initiatives as a key priority.

The demographic statistics of the Bathurst Region give strong support for a quality rail service:-

- Proximity and accessibility to major regional centres and Sydney
- Gateway to Central West
- Gross local product per person for Bathurst is higher than for Regional NSW
- Base population is approx 40,000 and is growing at 1.23% yearly
- Age structure with over 50% of population in 18 to 64 age group, with an average age of 33 (compared with the state average of 36).
- Bathurst Regional Economy more than DOUBLED 2001 to 2009 to \$4.50 Billion
- Low unemployment at approx. 5%
- Residential and commercial property development to increase by 1/3rd over next 20 years.
- Strong education facilities with Charles Sturt University and Public and Private Schools
- Strong Tourism growth and focus
- World class conference facilities
- An Entertainment Centre that draws patrons from surrounding districts (including the Blue Mountains).
- Bathurst is an EVO Cities partner
- Properties are affordable – the median house price in central Bathurst is \$270,000, with a median unit price of just \$204,000 – rents are fairly high
- Gross yields are consistently over 5%, and the population growth keeps vacancy rates low (around 1%).

The outcomes from Victoria V/Line reintroduction of Regional Rail Services cannot be ignored. Regional areas are experiencing unprecedented growth.

To quote the Transport Minister " Our investment into regional rail has paid off and now we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the network can grow by adding more tracks and carriages to run more train services".

The Central West has an inadequate and substandard public transport network, especially where much of the rail infrastructure is more than 100 years old.

Bathurst Railway Station is at the western extremity of the CityRail network so Rail Action Bathurst submits that the Bathurst Community is entitled to **equity of access** to CityRail rail services by being provided with a daily, dedicated, CityRail commuter service direct to Sydney with a minimal of stops and providing a maximum 3 hour journey for commuters – forward leave Bathurst 6.00am, return leave Central 5.30pm.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission

John Hollis
Chair Rail Action Bathurst