



LACHLAN REGIONAL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE INC



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Dear Premier

Re: Lachlan Regional transport Committee

The Lachlan Regional Transport Committee (LRTC) comprises of the following member councils and shires:

Cabonne Council, Cowra Council, Dubbo Regional Council, Hilltops Council, Lachlan Shire, Lithgow Council, Temora Shire, Parkes Shire, Weddin Shire, Wollondilly Council, Wollongong City Council.

Together these Regional Councils and Shires have a population of approximately 421187 residents that contribute to the economic growth and development of NSW by generating approximately \$55.79b in GSP (2017/18) through the creation and operation of 28793 local businesses that provide approximately 148590 local jobs.

The key focus of the LRTC is to further the transport objectives of the constituent regional communities, to drive economic development and to ensure transport services (air, road and rail) are provided efficiently and effectively to allow the competitive movement of freight and people to access services not available in their regional areas.

The LRTC through its member Councils has for a number of years been progressing a number of projects through the State and Federal Governments which have received varying levels of commitment however to date little or no headway has been made in commencing these projects. To allow the LRTC to advise its Member Councils on the political appetite for the projects the LRTC would like clarification on your Party's position towards the following projects:

- 1) The Bells line of Roads has been on the Transport agenda for a number of years however to date there has been little if any progress on this important road corridor to allow traffic movement between regional NSW and Sydney.
 - The LRTC would like your Part's position on the future development of a safe and swift corridor between Central West NSW and Sydney together with
 - possible timeframes to progress further planning for the corridor
- 1) The Blayney to Demondrille rail line has been subject to many feasibility and operational reports and discussed with the NSW Government and Transport representatives on a number of occasions. This line had Private sector interest in its construction and operation and the previous Minister for Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay had committed \$5m towards this project. However, to date this project has not progressed.
 - The LRTC would like your Party's position on the future development and operation of the Blayney to Demondrille rail line and
 - If the promised contribution of \$5m will be honoured
 - That the May 2018 report prepared by Lycopodium is made available to LRTC
- 2) The Maldon to Dombarton (MD) rail line has had a chequered history with construction of the line commenced in the 1980s but ceased in the late 1980s under the Greiner Government. Since then and after much local community agitation the Federal Government initiated Neville report of 2006 recommended that a feasibility investigation be undertaken on the line's feasibility.

The Federal Government allocated \$300k for a pre-feasibility study to identify the work undertaken prior to the project ceasing and if the project should proceed to a full feasibility study. The consultants recommended that a full feasibility should be undertaken as the MD rail line had operational and economic benefits not only on freight but also on the heavily congested South Coast line.

Following this recommendation, the Federal Government allocated \$25m to the NSW Government through RMS to get the project “shovel ready”. The report was never made public but following an FOI request by the member for Wollongong Paul Scully the report provided to him we understand demonstrated a positive net economic benefit if the MD rail line was constructed. The Illawarra Business Chamber has also completed its own investigation and report on the feasibility of the MD rail line.

Following completion of the RMS report Expressions to Tender were invited by RMS, two submissions were received however RMS rejected these on the basis that they were non-confirming. Both Parties argued this point as we understand at no stage did RMS seek clarification on the submissions or request further information. The proponents we understand would fund the project privately.

- The LRTC would like your Party’s position regarding completion of the Maldon to Dombarton rail line. We note that further investigations without a commitment to construct is not a commitment.
- 3) The Weddin and Temora Shires have been in discussion with RMS regarding the possible movement of road trains through some roads in the Shire. However, approval has not been granted due to the narrow road in some parts of the network. This prohibition effectively means that road trains either need to uncouple the trailer or take a longer route imposing a significant cost on grain farmers. The LRTC does not advocate or condone any unsafe practices but proposes that the matter is supported if safe and that the narrow roads are widened to allow the safe movement of freight and road trains.
- LRTC would like your Party’s position regarding supporting the safe movement of road trains and freight on approved roads in the Weddin and Temora Shires and/or
 - Investigating widening of relevant roads to allow road trains and freight to transit through the Shires
- 4) The Dubbo Shire Council has expressed concern on the alignment of the proposed Dubbo Bridge. The concern is that based on local knowledge the Shire contends that the objective of traffic using the various highways and roads that feed into Dubbo is to go “through” Dubbo rather than “into” Dubbo. The proposed alignment will effectively direct heavy traffic and freight to use local roads. This alignment if it proceeds will have a significant negative impact on local business and impose a safety risk on the community.

The Shire is of the view that based on the local knowledge and information that a bypass around Dubbo would be more effective and efficient for all concerned as it would connect three highways (Mitchell H’way, Newell H’way, to Newcastle) at Boothenba Road East. RMS have advised that Political support is required before the realignment can be considered.

- The LRTC would like your Party’s position regarding supporting the Dubbo Bridge realignment to bypass Dubbo
- 5) The Inland Rail is supported by member councils however there is concern that many of the Agricultural issues remain outstanding and if not addressed could have a significant impact on the efficient operations of farmers and agriculture.
- The LRTC would like your Party’s support to ensure that the concerns of farmers are heard and addressed by ARTC wherever possible
- 6) The Harden railway station is the “Gateway” to the Hilltops Shire which is the amalgam of a number of local shires following the recent Council consolidation. Hilltops Shire Council would like to ensure that the railway station is an asset that can be used by the Community and is kept in a neat and tidy state so that the local community can be proud of this asset. Some work has progressed to ensure the cleanliness of the station and this is much appreciated however the Council would like to increase use of the vacant rail land for tourism purposes and also to provide facilities for the storage and as necessary maintenance of heritage rail wagons on the site as has been discussed with a potential proponent. A proposal to seek support for the transfer of un-used railway land and rail office space has been previously forwarded to the appropriate parties with no progress to date
- LRTC would like your Party’s position on the transfer of unused railway assets to the Hilltops Shire Council as per the attached submission.

- The importance of regional communities cannot be overstated as is evident by the 2017/18 GSP Of \$55.79b however to encourage growth in these communities, encourage relocation of people from heavily congested and populated cities and to provide a diversified economy it is important that the infrastructure and services are in place or at least planned to be in place within an acceptable timeframe.

Your Party's support or otherwise to the above matters will assist the LRTC to advise its member Councils accordingly. I will be happy to discuss any of the above items at a mutually convenient time and I can be contacted on 0400055460 or by email at dfigliomeni1@bigpond.com

Yours sincerely



Dennis Hughes
Sec/Treas LRTC

For Dom Figliomeni
Chair LRTC

Member Councils: Lachlan, Young, Parkes Blayney, Oberon, Weddin, Cabonne, Dubbo City, Cowra, Lithgow City, Wollondilly Shire, Temora, Lachlan Valley Railway, Hilltops, Wollongong City, Centurion Group

