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10th June 2018

Andrew Constance
Minister for Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

Dear Minister

Re Harden Railway Station and rail precinct

At the Lachlan Regional Transport Committee meeting dated 19 May 2018 the current and future management of the Harden Railway Station was raised, not only in relation to the current poor state of the station but how the station and the precinct can be used to enhance the tourist potential of Harden and to simultaneously improve the aesthetics of the precinct and the town.

Construction of the station building occurred over a number of years commencing around 1881. The 1881 building replaced an earlier 1877 two-story combined residence and station building. Alterations to the building were made in 1884 with the addition of refreshment rooms. Further alterations were made to the building in 1919 to its current form.

Plans dating from 1915 show the brick station building comprising of a central waiting room, telegraph, traffic inspector, and Station Master's offices, ladies lavatories, men's urinals, and a booking parcels office, with the attached refreshment Room containing a dining room and bar, with 4 staff bedrooms and a bathroom above, a sitting room, kitchen, and a fenced in yard containing store rooms and an additional toilet.

As can be seen from the following summary responsibility for the railway precinct is fragmented.

MAJOR STRUCTURES – Managed by RailCorp

- Station Building – second – class, type 3 (1877, 1881, 1919)
- Refreshment Rooms (1884)
- Platform (1881, 1914)
- Subway (c1919)

MAJOR STRUCTURES – Managed by ARTC

- Signal Box – north, type I (1912)
- Signal Box – south, type I (1912)
- Station Master’s Residence – 51 Whitton St, type6 (c1885)

OTHER ITEMS – Managed by ARTC

- Relics of Former Engine Shed, Turntable and Coal Stage Support.

The Harden Shire Council began negotiations with the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in late 2013 to gauge ARTC’s interest in entering into a long-term lease agreement for the Harden railway lands – known locally being as the old rail yards with Council.

The objectives of the lease were to improve the appearance of the Harden streetscape and as part of the Shires development project improve the overall aesthetic of the town and safety of access over the land. The plan would also increase parking whilst ensuring the strong rail heritage and its overall importance to the Harden community was preserved, highlighted and promoted.

It was proposed at the time that the area would be designated for caravan/RV/truck parking as well as Neill Street shopping precinct staff parking, and that connection pathways were developed to provide access to Neill Street. The Hilltops Council is currently reviewing a draft plan of management for the precinct to incorporate these measures and work at gaining permission and funding for the project to succeed.

Uses for the precinct and buildings include an approach by The Director of G’Day rail, Rodney Clancy who raised the possibility of housing 12 – 16 Railway carriages at the Harden sidings and use of some of the buildings.

The fleet of carriages were initially designed for the Southern Aurora overnight express passenger service between Australia’s two largest cities – Sydney and Melbourne. The darling of Australian travel at the time, the Southern Aurora ran from 16th April 1962 to 2nd August 1986.

G’Day rail commissioned Lithgow Railway Workshop to fully restore the carriages. The carriages have been restored and if they can be housed in Harden it will be a significant boost to the regional tourist economy.

There has also been interest to lease some of the disused rooms and facilities from local organisations such as the Men’s Shed, Rotary and the local Murrumburrah High School to run Wellbeing Program.

Harden is the most vandalized station on the Southern Line and has the highest maintenance costs, there is CCTV but continuous monitoring due to lack of manpower is an issue. The level of vandalism is a major concern for the community and the Hilltops Council. It is in all our interest that the station be presented in the best possible condition for the travelling public and the local community.

Dear Minister our group would like to explore the possibility of a joint arrangement with ARTC for the management and ongoing use of the Harden Railway Station and the Harden Rail precinct for the mutual benefit of our community and the NSW regional economy.

The contact at the Harden Shire Council to progress this exciting opportunity is Acting General Manager, David Aber. Hilltops Council, Young

Yours Sincerely

Dom Figliomeni
President LRTC

Member Councils:	Lachlan	Weddin	Blayney	Hilltops	Oberon
	Parkes	Cobonne	Dubbo City	Cowra	Lithgow City
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