

Business Northwest is the operational arm of the Burnie Chamber of Commerce & Industry representing the Burnie and Wynyard region. Established in 1937 the organisation represents small and medium businesses, providing business support, training, networking activities to over 100 members.

Burnie/Wynyard airport has been a lynchpin for business people in the region since the 1930s and has served us well. Recent upgrades to the tarmac and the changeover by QantasLink to larger aircraft (Q400) provide for increased numbers of passengers to use the facility. In fact, our passenger numbers have been steadily increasing and are back to pre COVID levels.

The north west coast of Tasmania is the about to undergo a renewable energy revolution with over \$15B of projects in planning. [MarinusLink](#), an underwater HVDC connector to Victoria that is tripartite government owned; federal government (49%), Victoria (33.3%) and Tasmania (17.7%) recently received approval, and work is expected to commence in the onshoring location at Heybridge just east of Burnie in Q2 this year. MarinusLink including the North West Transmission Development (NWTD) is the key to the remainder of the projects moving forward.

Additionally there are two large mining projects potentially occurring in the next two years – Renison Tailings Retreatment Project ([Rentails](#)) which will require a construction workforce of 400 and Mt Lyell copper mine restart with 250 permanent jobs with a significant FIFO component.

Available workforce is a huge challenge for the region as there are estimates of up to 2000 workers being required at peak times (around 2028) and I estimate over 70% will need to be FIFO workers. Whilst accommodation is a major issue for us the travel component is another to be addressed. Assuming a 14 on/ 7 off roster there could be up to 500 FIFOs arriving each week. Whilst Qantas and Rex can add flights to meet the demand or project proponents using charters, I am more concerned of the increased cost a major security upgrade will have on the projects.

Security is of course a primary concern for all of us. It is a national priority and therefore should be nationally funded as to leave it to state government or local governments may lead to a lesser solution or one inconsistent with national standards. The cost of implementing security at a regional airport is prohibitive for many smaller airports and Burnie airport is no different.

Whether an airport is private, public or a private public partnership the impact of a \$20m+ upgrade is significant and not to be taken lightly. The impact of providing security personnel is also a major expense estimated at \$2.5m pa.

Estimates of an increase in ticket price of \$100-\$150 per flight could severely jeopardise the viability of the airport as many passengers already use budget airlines out of Launceston for family travel – anecdotally the introduction of cheap fares by these airlines in the early 2000s decreased the pax at Burnie from 100,000 down to 70,000.

The north west and west coast regions of Tasmania which are serviced by Burnie Wynyard airport are the economic engine room of Tasmania producing \$3B of minerals and hundreds of millions in forestry and agricultural products for local, domestic and international markets. The airport is key to all these industries as many companies are dependent upon FIFO workers for operations and for executives in management roles. Of course, there is a large contingent of local business operators who rely on the airport to access suppliers based in Melbourne and Sydney and likewise executives coming to Tasmania to transact business in this area.

Tourism is another major industry for the area as we are world renowned for our pristine scenery and clean environment. Any imposition of extra fees or taxes could be very harmful for this vital industry sector.

Sea freight between Tasmania and Victoria is assisted by the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme – the amount of assistance is based on the difference between the freight costs of moving the goods by sea and the notional freight costs of moving them by road over an equivalent distance. Is this something we should consider to support passenger travel between Tasmania and Victoria?

I thank the committee members for their time and the effort they are making on this critically important subject.

Ian Jones

PRESIDENT

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