

This is a submission to the Senate Committee on Public Transport from Mary Jenkins

*Imagine the jobs that will be created in a Transport Revolution?

*This is long overdue in Australia.

Since early settlement transport has always been a major issue in all states. The population concentrated around the ports. The rail lines grew from cities for passengers and towards the ports. At one time many passengers' services to country areas operated but these were closed down and the country towns suffered.

eg; WA is a State that is so widespread it is essential that rail transport linkage in this 21st century if the State economy is to grow in future. Today the limited main rail lines extend either within metropolitan Perth or to the port of Fremantle. Rail also operated to Port Headland and Geraldton and Albany solely for the resources industry. Nothing for passenger services in these regions.

Australia's abundant natural resources gave rise to an extractive system, designed to leave as little wealth behind as possible in the isolated outlying country town. The present rail system is a classic indicator of an extractive economy. By this I mean to facilitate the resources boom that digs up and ships out to the rest of the world with poor investment in isolated townships. The rail used by mining and forestry industries is classic examples of railways that flow towards the ports.

The infrastructure of a country is a guide to the purpose of its development. If the main roads and railways form a network, linking the regions and settlements within the regions, they are likely to have been developed to enhance internal commerce and mobility. This has not happened in WA. Railways that flow towards ports and the border were built to empty the state of its wealth for the benefit of overseas

corporate interests. This does little to enhance the region's economy or transport system for population growth and community wealth. Building of rail systems would provide much work (even for prisoners) and open up country towns. Jobs in alternative energy production nodes in country areas would help to slow down the forthcoming crisis.

In early days when the roads were built to transport heavy haulage the car culture developed rapidly. WA became the most car reliance state in the world. Passenger rail transportation was reduced until it grew recently in the metropolitan region to northern and southern Perth suburbs. This has been a great success.

The upkeep of WA's network of roads will strip the Federal and State's wealth in future as many of the roads are in need of expensive upgrading. The taxpayers are left with this huge cost mainly so the trucking industry can operate.

The economy of country towns frequently deteriorate in a boom bust economy, which has been the system since settlement in Australia. The lack of an efficient rail system in outlying regions has prevented growth. A modern railway system would ensure the economic growth of country towns and also create more jobs. However country towns remain a depot for overseas corporate empires that strips resources then moves on, leaving taxpayers with environmental disasters?

Massive sackings of mine workers left in the lurch as companies move on. The fly in fly out policy means the corporations take no local responsibility. Small local businesses are left to struggle. Ill advised Governments, weak unions and workers condoned this form of work practices. The whole economy is now suffering.

Latin America and Wales in the UK have suffered the same long term lack of investment in railways. This system has kept them in poverty while international corporations exploit and extract the wealth of each nation

for their greedy shareholders and overpaid CEO's. Now there is a world crisis it is time our government invested in internal growth. Build railway links that would provide not only work and wealth in small towns but also tourism. Country towns will benefit from a huge capital investment in each State's railways in future.

Spain has already begun a revolution in travel habits. Spanish high speed rail has grown by 28%. The high speed train journey from Madrid to Barcelona now takes 2hours 35 minutes. This controls carbon emissions since the Very Fast Train uses 19% less energy than other trains is more efficient than air travel that often force long delays at airports. Spain has increased infrastructure projects to combat the recession and plans to invest \$145bn in high speed rail networks until 2020.

Australia could learn from this Spanish initiative by investing in such projects that would save Australian outback towns from extinction. Open up tourism and give more jobs outside the metropolitan regions. Prisoners could also be put to work on building a new railway system.

Government public spending should have long term plans that will give workers jobs and hope for the future without Government being forced to be beholden to corporations in China, Japan and the USA. The community doesn't want charity it wants work and security for the future. A revolution in the rail transport system will give us hope and long term economic benefits. We are fed up of greedy boom bust economy policies.

* [www.Monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com) <<http://www.monbiot.com/>> The Open Veins of Wales 30 12 2008

The Guardian Weekly International News 16.01.09

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