

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural  
and Regional Affairs and Transport  
C/- Parliament House  
Canberra

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to make a late submission to:

*Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services.*

My professional background of about 30 years has been in secondary teaching and elite and sub elite level team sports coaching.

I have a keen and long standing amateur interest in a range of transport and related issues and I have taken the time over recent years to make transport-related submissions to agencies of each of the three levels of governments.

I have neither formal academic nor professional experience in transport related fields.

Sincerely,

Ian Addison

**THE HOBART – BELL BAY RAIL CORRIDOR :**

*is potentially one of the most important transport corridors in Tasmania because it provides:*

- a key current (and under developed) intermodal freight link for southern Tasmanian businesses to the nearest northern Tasmanian port
- a potential moderately high speed passenger rail link between Tasmania's two largest conurbations (Hobart – Launceston)
- ***a potential urban passenger rail link from near the Hobart CBD northward along its important western shore (of the Derwent River) corridor to the Brighton***
- *a potential urban passenger rail link from outer urban areas north and south of Launceston, including the Launceston Airport, with the fringe of Launceston's CBD*

Given rail transport's flexibility and its effectiveness for delivering a broad spectrum of solutions to transport and land use challenges, all four potential uses of this corridor (outlined above) are deserving of an holistic approach to planning, development and funding.

However, in respecting the guidelines shaping this particular Senate Committee inquiry within which only the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> uses strictly fall, the focus of this submission will be on the 3<sup>rd</sup> as indicated by the bold type.

### **Proposition**

The Federal Government, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Government and particular local government councils, contributes significantly to:

- funding the planning, implementation and ongoing operation of an urban passenger rail service utilising Hobart's western shore rail corridor.
- facilitating the use of complementary strategies for redefining future urban development along this corridor towards a much more sustainable form.

### **Rationale**

1. Greater Hobart's future as an attractive, functional and competitive regional city is currently compromised in part by the following interrelated 'shortcomings':

- a lack of high quality, high capacity public transport including a 'fixed rail' option on appropriate corridors.
- a highly dispersed and unsustainable form of urban development with excessive geographical and environmental footprints for its approximately 200 000 population.

2. Passenger rail transport is respected for its:

- potential for versatility, safety, quality, capacity and attractiveness
- environmental performance as well as its cost effectiveness when measured over the long-term against a breadth of relevant criteria.

My personal engagement with the advocacy of this proposition is related to the following:

### Vision

1. To be able to travel to work in Sandy Bay from my home in Glenorchy *by urban rail transport*, at least as far as the city, by the end of 2014. In the longer term I would envisage such a journey being made to the large Sandy Bay education and entertainment/convention precinct 'completely' by rail transport.
2. To be able to travel to York Park (currently known as Aurora Stadium) in Launceston to watch an AFL match *by moderately high speed rail service* by the end of 2018.

### Stimulus event

Mid-December 1999, I am:

- travelling through central Glenorchy in heavy pre Christmas traffic and noting the sparsely used rail corridor running along the edge of Glenorchy CBD.
- predicting this would be normal (non seasonal peak) busy traffic in 10-15 years
- recognising the impending 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of Hobart's former suburban rail service (on New Year's Eve 1999).

For almost a decade I have focused on a commitment to contribute towards having the rail corridor re used for urban passenger transport in a suitable contemporary form, and hence the commencement of a period of:

- research to become personally better informed
- political lobbying to help achieve this end.

Ongoing personal workday travel by private vehicle along the corridor, and a developing awareness of the many transport/land use impacts on economic, environmental and social aspects of life in greater Hobart have continued to fuel my advocacy of this vital project.

### Key points about this submission

1. It is at least as much about appropriate future urban redevelopment as it is about a proposed transport project.  
The integration of land use and transport planning is a central consideration; the Australian Transport Council's 'National Charter of Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning' is a guiding document in this regard.
2. It does not include an assertion that 'rail' is the superior option in a multi modal system; 'rail' is being promoted as a particularly appropriate and effective option in helping solve a specific land use and transport problem.  
I promote a mix of transport options as necessary for a sustainable system.
3. Principles associated with the interrelated concepts of '*smartgrowth*', '*new urbanism*' and '*transit-orientated development*' are important influences in my thinking
4. Some 'official' studies, considerations, proposals and projects in relation to the use of parts of the Hobart – Bell Bay rail corridor will be referred to and elaborated upon.

### **Brief description of the western shore rail corridor**

This historic route dates from the early/mid 1870s construction of the Tasmanian Main Line Railway line from Hobart to Evandale Rd (now Western Junction) and then onto Launceston.

The section currently within greater Hobart (essentially about 25 km to Brighton) follows a virtually unchanged route since the 1870s.

From just beyond the north-east corner of Hobart's CBD, it follows the fringe of the Derwent River close to the Hobart Aquatic Centre, the historic Royal Botanical Gardens and the natural and developed recreational areas in the vicinity of Cornelian Bay including the Tasmanian Hockey Centre.

Heading slightly inland past the first of the residential areas, at East New Town, the route continues through a further 11 km or more of almost unbroken residential northern suburbs until the Derwent River is rejoined near Austins Ferry.

Within a ½ kilometre either side of the route through this section are numerous retail, commercial and light industrial areas of Glenorchy City in addition to almost all the secondary education campuses of the northern suburbs. Further recreational and key tourist drawcards are positioned close to the route.

Beyond Austins Ferry lie further discrete residential and commercial areas of Granton, Bridgewater and Brighton, the latter two being reached after the route has crossed the river.

Running parallel to the rail route are the heavily used Brooker Ave and Main Rd, the major arterial roads running longitudinally through greater Hobart's northern suburbs.

The southern Tasmanian freight handling hub is located at the traditional inner city rail yards near Macquarie Point.

Currently plans approved by state and federal governments are at an advanced stage for the development of a new intermodal hub near Brighton. Current thinking in official circles appears to be that after the change of venue there is no foreseeable future use for freight trains running along the western shore rail corridor to central Hobart.

### **The latent value of this rail corridor**

1. The proximity of the rail route to numerous activity centres and residential areas and thereby to link these travel generating centres.
2. The potential to ease capacity issues on both Brooker Ave and Main Rd in a manner which does not promote further private vehicle use.
3. The potential for a change in land use from the current mix of very low density residential areas and zone-separated commercial areas into more intensively utilised mixed-use zones. Sections of the northern suburbs of Hobart have a number of areas well suited to being redeveloped in this manner.
4. The proven 'power' of rail transport options to be an effective catalyst for this type of land use change.

## **Some historical perspectives**

Hobart was a leader in Australian electric powered 'light rail' transport with the early establishment of a three route tram network opened in 1893, and subsequently extended over several decades.

This system helped foster a 'sustainable' and compact form of urban growth in Hobart prior to WW II. The system closed in October 1960.

Over the final years of the tram operations, some routes were converted for electric powered trolley bus operation, a similar network to the tram set up being maintained until roughly the end of the 1960s.

Through the post war era, fossil fuel powered buses were progressively introduced (this actually started well before in a small way) eventually completely replacing the electric powered trams and trolley buses.

Only very recently has the modern day Metro bus service commenced using vehicles with fuel modifications to lessen emissions.

The current network is far flung and endeavours to cater for the highly dispersed conurbation whose growth has been fuelled by excessive automobile use. Such a network, as with the provision of all kinds of services, is very costly to support.

For decades, up until the final day of 1974, a suburban and outer urban passenger rail service operated north of the city centre along the Derwent's western shore, some services reaching as far as Brighton on the Main South Line (Hobart towards Launceston, opened mid 1870s) and New Norfolk on the Derwent Valley branch. Passenger rail services to each of the Cadbury plant at Claremont and the 'Zinc Works' at Risdon utilised short branch lines off the main line in Hobart's northern suburbs.

Up until the 1960s, these services were comparable, although on a smaller scale, to the suburban passenger rail services operating at the time in Brisbane and Perth. Both of these mainland operations have since been dramatically modernised and expanded, and have become an integral part of shaping the development of the large cities that they have become.

Hobart had a passenger rail connection with Launceston for over 100 years from the opening of the Main South Line until July 1978, at around the time that the federal Australian National Railways took over operations of the Tasmanian system from Tasmanian Government railways.

The main rail route north of Bridgewater near Hobart's northern fringes was built to low standards, and has barely been improved to this day. The extraordinarily slow travel times for passenger trains were far below 20<sup>th</sup> Century expectations.

Operational difficulties on this route currently hamper efficient freight train operations. Current rail investment plans via joint federal/state funding, while useful, will fall well short of developing a route through southern Tasmania that is worthy of 21<sup>st</sup> century transport.

The rail line from Launceston to Bell Bay is Tasmania's most recent rail network extension having been developed about a century after our first railway, during the early 1970s. This route was built to superior standards compared with the 1870s construction, but is quite mediocre by contemporary standards.

## **Current Issues**

## Auslink National Transport Network and Tasmanian Corridor Strategy

The current rail route north from the central city rail terminal in Hobart is part of the AusLink national transport network, as is the entire rail route to Bell Bay as well as to Burnie.

The future of the whole of the National Transport Network (road and rail) in Tasmania has come under consideration in the Auslink Tasmanian Corridor Strategy.

What will become of the Auslink status of the section of rail corridor south of Bridgewater when the southern freight hub is moved to Brighton?

The main 'highway' (Brooker Ave/Hwy) from Granton to Hobart has been recently upgraded to full AusLink status, rightly so in my view.

This highway is recognised as a key transport link for greater Hobart given the relatively high traffic levels comprising both commuter private vehicles and freight carrying vehicles, including a significant number of the largest trucks permitted to operate in Tasmania.

This route is developing as a diabolical zone in terms of safety and air quality as well as the amenity/ambience of the numerous residents that occupy significant parts of its length.

The closely parallel Main Road creates similar difficulties for users.

Perhaps more than any other corridor in Tasmania, this one (the combined Brooker Hwy/Main Rd) needs an alternative means of travel.

The main rail route north from Hobart closely parallels both Brooker Ave and the old Main Rd (former highway) through many of the key activity centres along the Derwent River's western shore.

*This rail route has great potential to provide that alternative travel option.*

I supported the upgraded Auslink status of Brooker Ave as part of a personal submission in regard to the draft Auslink Tasmanian Corridor Strategy.

I was also constructively critical of aspects of the draft strategy as they pertain to rail transport including the lack of any apparent consideration for future passenger rail options and the lack of specificity in relation to future upgrading of the freight rail network.

I have concerns, already warranted, that local authorities will focus their transport strategies for the Brooker Ave corridor solely on potential new federal funding arrangements by dealing only with supply-side issues on this arterial road rather than taking a more balanced approach with a view to managing demand for private vehicle Brooker Ave travel.

*It is imperative in my view that the rail corridor south of Bridgewater to Hobart:*

- *retains its Auslink status*
- *is actively considered for future use, for both passenger and freight options*
- *is given at least comparable future funding priority with Brooker Ave*

## The Brighton Bypass

This \$164 million highway bypass project is apparently part of an approximately \$ ½ billion joint federal/state funding commitment for an overall upgrade of the Midland Highway between Granton (on the western shore of the Derwent opposite Bridgewater) and Dysart approximately 25 highway kilometres to the north.

Its relevance to the southern end of the Hobart – Bell Bay rail corridor is the close proximity of the two over at least 6 km of the 9.5 km bypass. The standard of alignment of the current rail route, even with the just opened new Jordan River rail bridge, is poor especially in comparison to the planned alignment of the highway bypass.

In my view there is currently a one in fifty year opportunity to *make active provision now* for a much better future rail route as long as this provision is made in the final detailed planning for the highway bypass.

Having made this point to the state parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works at its 19 January 2009 hearing on the Brighton Bypass planning submission by the state Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER), it is now a matter of personally waiting to see if that recommendation has been acted upon by DIER.

The Hobart Railyards Urban Design Strategy (HRUDS)  
[http://www.waterfront.tas.gov.au/our\\_priorities/railyards.htm](http://www.waterfront.tas.gov.au/our_priorities/railyards.htm)

The Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority (SCWA) has for about two years been working on the development of an overarching planning strategy for future use of the city rail yards on the assumption that the southern freight hub will be moved (to Brighton).

I have taken personal interest since the earliest times and subsequently I have submitted a detailed response to the release of the draft HRUDS in July 2008.

It has been encouraging to note the acknowledgement within the final HRUDS of the need to make future provision for freight rail access to the port and for passenger rail access to and through the railyards precinct.

Further detailed specification as to what would be provided and how has yet to be made apparent.

*What is actively provided for within planning for future use of the current railyards is crucial to future utilisation of the overall rail corridor itself, and to the intent of the proposals included in this submission.*

## Tasmanian Urban Public Transport Study

In the latter part of 2008 the Premier and the Infrastructure Minister jointly announced this multi modal passenger transport study (developed partly as a follow up to the Premier's Fuel Summit) which was reported to have included a study into the potential for using 'light rail' passenger operation on the Hobart – Brighton rail corridor.

Funding for the 'light rail' study was announced in the state budget for 2008-9.

Recent press releases about developments related to this overall public transport study don't appear to have indicated what progress has been made on the 'light rail' component.

*I have concerns about the potential for an assessment of 'light rail' to minimize the likelihood of a future passenger rail operation along this urban rail corridor.*

The following potential concerns about the assessment process are submitted without any detailed background knowledge about this particular process and should be accepted on that basis. The concerns include:

1. it might be limited to an assessment of a 'light rail' option only and not allow for the possibility of one of many variants in style of rail operation
2. it might make ridership predictions based largely on current population and population densities as well as those predicted under existing growth strategies and trends
3. ridership may also be predicted on existing bus usage figures for the corridor and ignore the consistently higher 'drawing' power of a decent quality rail option
4. its cost focus might be on up-front expenses with little or no consideration given to the durability and longevity of rail infrastructure
5. cost estimates may also be based on generic figures associated with 'light rail' developments elsewhere, and not factor in the considerable cost advantages of reusing an existing rail corridor which still has a significant degree of usable infrastructure
6. it might ignore the economic and development benefits of a rail-based option whereby commercial and residential activity can be intensified around stations/stops thereby fostering an integrated style of land use and more sustainable form of urban growth, a form of development referred to as 'transit orientated development' (TOD)
7. it might ignore the importance of high quality public transport options as a factor in making this city competitive in a national and global context
8. there may be philosophical preferences/biases against a 'rail' option by the organisation performing the study

## 'The Hobart Western Shore Public Transport Corridor'

[http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public\\_submissions/published/files/230\\_aiatasmanianbranch\\_SUB.pdf](http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_submissions/published/files/230_aiatasmanianbranch_SUB.pdf)

The title 'western shore rail corridor' used in this submission above should be distinguished from 'The Hobart Western Shore Public Transport Corridor' as proposed by another group of organisations.

A three-way collaboration involving:

- the Tasmanian chapters of the Planning Institute Australia (PIA) and the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), and
- the Housing and Community Research Unit (HACRU) of the University of Tasmania (UTAS)

has made a submission to Infrastructure Australia in the latter part of 2008 recommending:

*"...the expansion of the current use of the (freight) rail corridor to include a dedicated commuter bus corridor, whilst maintaining rail access for tourist rail, and specific freight tasks. The introduction of a new commuter movement corridor will significantly reduce the City's over reliance on the single National highway, which currently services northern residential suburbs and provides major road freight and inter urban transport access to the city from the North."*

*"Significant areas of land adjacent to the rail corridor have high redevelopment potential and existing services."*

*"The route creates significant medium and high density mixed residential development opportunities in areas potentially directly serviced by the corridor and currently underdeveloped. Successful implementation would reduce the load on current regional road transport networks."*

The joint submission refers to:

*"The development of TOD (Transit Orientated Development) urban villages focused around the public transport corridor."*

Further comments include:

*"Clear Government policy direction and planning framework will promote private development investment along the corridor. We encourage all levels of government to contain the sprawl of existing urban areas and to plan and implement sustainable and best use of land, water and transport resources".*

I have no connection whatsoever with the proponents, and I can certainly not speak on their behalf.

However, having independently come to a similar view, I agree strongly with the overall thrust of the joint PIA/AIA/HACRU proposal.

I especially value the comment that supports *".. maintaining rail access for tourist rail, and specific freight tasks."*

as I do the several references to TOD.

However I am strongly opposed to *"...the expansion of the current use of the (freight) rail corridor to include a dedicated commuter bus corridor"*.

The reasons for my opposition are:

- the complexity and cost associated with developing a busway that incorporates continued use for some types of rail access
- the restrictions placed on the use of other potentially more valuable forms of rail transport along the 'converted' corridor
- the alternative opportunities for providing enhanced bus service along existing arterial roads via simple measures facilitating bus priority at intersections and other traffic bottle necks
- The incorrect notion that busways and urban rail corridors and their corresponding services are directly comparable
- The questionable potential of a busway to catalyse urban redevelopment in the manner outlined in the proposal

My opposition is not to the concept of a busway 'per se', but to the conversion of an urban rail corridor to that use, especially in the case of greater Hobart where there is only one rail corridor.

***Urban rail corridors are extraordinarily valuable for use as rail corridors.***

### **Passenger Rail Service Options**

It is not the intention of this submission to specify the nature any potential passenger rail service along the Hobart – Brighton corridor, rather to briefly outline some points worth considering.

- There currently exists a broadening spectrum of operational styles, some of which are compatible with each other.
- It is worth considering the potential need for an urban passenger operation to coexist with future rail freight movements (eg. to/from the port and to/from the Risdon industrial precinct) and longer distance inter regional passenger services (eg. Hobart – Launceston).
- The rail corridor can be extended, for particular types of operations, beyond the current city rail yards into the CBD or beyond (such as the key educational precinct in Sandy Bay) an enhance in capacity and safety.
- The commencement of operations may be over only part of the corridor (eg. Hobart railyards – central Glenorchy) with subsequent extensions in either direction.
- The vehicle fleet at commencement might also be modest and simple with a view to subsequent vehicle upgrades and expanded fleet size.
- Short term consideration must be given to protecting the rail corridor from continued incursions and nearby incompatible land uses.
- Short term consideration must be given to allowing for potential stops/stations and locations for compatible mixed-use urban redevelopment

*My contention is that it is important to have a single organisational unit to take overall control of all aspects of the development of the rail corridor and the associated passenger transport system.*

## **Submission Summary**

1. The entire Hobart – Bell Bay rail corridor is of great potential value to Tasmania, particularly southern Tasmania, for at least the four aspects outlined at the start of this submission. To realise this potential across all aspects will require coordinated action from all levels of government.
2. This entire route is currently recognised as part of the Auslink national Transport Network.
3. The utilisation of the section of the route between Bridgewater Junction and Hobart will change after the southern freight hub is moved from the city to Brighton.  
*This section should continue to be part of the Auslink network for reasons that include those mentioned below.*
4. This route has great potential for re use as an urban rail corridor. As such it would provide dual benefits as a high capacity, high quality public transport corridor as well as providing a catalytic effect for urban redevelopment (*using the principles associated with Transit Orientated Development*) of several areas of greater Hobart's northern suburbs.
5. Road capacity problems on the parallel Brooker Ave and Main Rd would be eased without the need for costly extra road construction that will produce only short term benefits.
6. Hobart's northern suburbs was historically well served by passenger rail transport: the 'heavy rail' suburban service to Brighton that closed at the end of 1974, and the nation leading 'light rail' electric tram network which had termini at Lenah Valley, Springfield and (central) Glenorchy. The last tram ran in late 1960.
7. Passenger rail transport as a mode has continued to evolve considerably since the 1970s. There is now a broad spectrum of operational forms from which to match greater Hobart's particular needs. There is a proven form that enables rail vehicles to use traditional rail routes as well as continue on street running tram-style routes.
8. Although I am supportive of high quality bus transport in general, I am strongly opposed to the conversion of this unique urban rail corridor into a busway. There are other ways to provide bus priority on existing arterial roads.
9. The possibility of re introducing passenger rail services has gained a degree of political traction at state level. A study of 'light passenger rail' between Hobart and Brighton was announced in the State Budget for 2008-9 and subsequently incorporated into a multi modal Urban Public Transport Study announced in September 2008.
10. Passenger rail service could be phased in, starting with a simpler operation with a view to expansion and enhancement over time and distance to suit land use developments and funding streams.

11. The possibility for a future service depends on current and near term actions: assessment criteria must be suitably broad based to encompass a mix of economic, environmental and social goals; and planning must integrate transport with land use requirements.
12. Rail transport planning along the entire Hobart-Brighton corridor must be conducted holistically and must include making provision for potential stations/stops, vehicle storage and maintenance facilities and enhancements to capacity (additional tracks) and quality of the route (deviations etc). *Currently planning work conducted by two separate government agencies in relation to the Hobart Railyards redevelopment and the Brighton Bypass highway project has to date given limited specific consideration to the future provision of passenger rail services.*

To realise the widespread benefits of an urban passenger rail service using part or all of the Brighton - Hobart corridor, significant government investment is required.

Over recent years federal and state governments have seen fit to invest heavily in parts of the state road network.

The imminent construction of the \$164 million Brighton Bypass is part of an approximately \$ ½ billion government (mostly federal) commitment to fund upgrades to the Midland Highway between Granton and Dysart (almost 25 km).

***A significant but lower level of investment in the 25 km Brighton – Hobart rail corridor will deliver a much wider range of benefits to greater Hobart, in my considered opinion.***

*I.J. ADDISON  
MARCH 2009*