



SUBMISSION NO. 6

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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 STANDING COMMITTEE  
 TRANSPORT AND  
 REGIONAL SERVICES

SUBMISSION

INQUIRY

**The Privatisation of Regional Infrastructure  
 and  
 Government Business Enterprises  
 in  
 Regional and Rural Australia**

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**House of Representatives Standing Committee  
 on  
 Transport and Regional Services**

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By

**Councillor Betty Moore. J.P.**

**9th November, 2003**

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**NOTED OMISSION OF PAGE NUMBERS ON BACKGROUND PAPERS  
THEREFORE MAKING SUB-TITLE TERMS OF REFERENCE LESS  
ACCESSIBLE FOR REFERENCE AND ANALYSIS**

**TELSTRA & ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY PRIVATISATION**

**Telstra sell-off recently shelved because of public outcry from many communities and elected representatives of all political persuasions.**

Rural small town businesses, town and village populations and broadacre industries know the limitations and lack of repaired or update technology which now limits their activities.

These populations are very much aware of the balance sheet profits - results of a very retrenched workforce in rural areas - lack of response times to repair outages - remaining staff worked off their feet - impossible to effectively cover the huge regions to which they are assigned - fatigue and stressed especially under emergency storm / flood / bushfire conditions - impacts greatly on worker's family life, lack of sleep, etc.

Safety in jeopardy to workers on-site, perpetually forced to drive long distances often under appalling weather conditions - puts the general motoring public in danger. Little consideration by both industries / sub-contractors given to lack of OH&S responsibilities and factors because of the over-emphasis of Shareholder Profits above all else.

National Competition Policy means nil regard to workers, or the general run of consumers. National Competition Policy does NOT provide cheaper services to the consumers, especially the smallest scale of users of Telstra Services and electricity providers, e.g. the remote located user, and the domestic situation, especially the aged now obliged to struggle on in their own homes locked into solitary confinement because the politicians and police, and court systems cannot control the ever increasing amount of crimes in every avenue of the population-at-large lives.

Worsened by the lack of sufficient funding to provide sufficient in-home care support systems or social inter-action exposure. Distinct lack of support housing, or, if it exists and vacancies might become available the lack of ability to pay the demanded huge entry fees.

**LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS - General travel + medical related.**

Worsened by the lack of within town limits and rural inter-town public affordable transport systems.

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**LACK OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES - Medical, dental, education, etc.**

Worsened by the lack ever increasing lack of essential services, especially medical related, due to the centralised ethos of economic rationalism which has occurred in this New England Region of NSW, by NEAHS and private, monopolised city based pathology and radiology which have scooped up independent locally based operations.

Worsened by the fact that most of the essential medical services including chemotherapy, rehabilitation, ophthalmologists, obstetrics services have been retracted to Armidale from Inverell - shire population of 16,000.

*INVERELL - A service town for some 30,000 people from surrounding towns, areas*

**BUT, NO STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO ADDRESS THE FACT THAT NO PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM EXISTS BETWEEN INVERELL AND ARMIDALE.**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW COUNTRYLINK TYPE COACH WOULD ALSO SERVICE THE TOWNS OF GILGAL, TINGHA, BUNDARRA, ASHFORD, INVERELL, DELUNGRA, BONSHAW, YETMAN, BINGARA, WARIALDA AND ALL POINTS INBETWEEN.**

**A PETITION SUPPORTED BY THE RESIDENTS OF THESE AREAS CONTAINING 983 SIGNATURES HAS BEEN IGNORED BY NSW GVT ALONG WITH A VERY COMPREHENSIVE 26 PAGE SUBMISSION COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF TRANSPORT / LIMITATIONS / PROBLEMS IN THIS IMMEDIATE NEW ENGLAND REGION AREA.**

**Background Paper - Rail Passenger statement - "has allowed retention and growth of rail services whose future was in doubt under government" .....**

**This statement is utter hogwash!**

**The exact opposite has occurred and is still occurring in this New England Region of NSW. State Rail is in the process of further retracting rail services from Armidale back to Tamworth.**

**The committee may be interested to learn that as of last week the only two remaining obstetricians in the entire New England Region based at Armidale and Tamworth resigned.**

**THE NEAREST OBSTETRICIAN IS AT NEWCASTLE.**

**How can pregnant women travel by public transport to get to Newcastle for pre-confinement, confinement and post confinement medical and related clinics????  
Much less, when labour is eminent.**

**Economic, centralised rationalism has no place in such circumstances.**

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Background Paper - Aviation - airports - centre column statements

Again, utter hogwash!

Ever since Mascot was privatised, the airfares in this region have increased.

This is yet another instance whereby the state and federal governments have dumped the real cost of provision of service onto the rural and remote local governments, especially those located on the western side of The Great dividing Range.

Many, such as the Inverell shire council have subsidised considerably the local, now bankrupted, airline by lowering landing charges. These charges have no hope of paying for the cost of maintaining our airport's infrastructure and CAA requirements.

Fares from Inverell to Sydney were in the vicinity of \$660. No ordinary rural / remote person can afford this. Only government bureaucrats.

Ill people trying to get to Sydney and back for acute medical care find these fares unrealistic and impossible to meet. Other transport systems are inhumane and torturous under such circumstances, because of the circuitous route imposed by Countrylink which forces people departing Inverell to travel very much farther (around two sides of a triangle) instead of by the most direct road.

And, the so-called IPTAAS - Isolated Passenger Travel Assistance Scheme is managed by NEAHS in such a way that no real benefit is obtainable for travel to Armidale or Tamworth - much less airfares.

Ambulances and taxis are not used for patient transport.  
Rural taxi fares apply - twice the flagfall and distance costing for a single journey.

And, no public transport system exists for ill and disabled people to go from Inverell to the Armidale Airport (132 KLMS DISTANCE) to catch a plane to Sydney.

As to the statement of 'private operators more ready access to capital funding etc'  
Again, Hogwash!

At Inverell in very recent times, in a last ditch stand to try and obtain an airline service, the proponents and the Inverell shire council have experienced the exact opposite. IF such a service does become a reality, The Inverell shire council shall be contributing a huge amount of cash - none of which shall be spent on upgrading the airport facilities as this contribution has had to be taken from other essential budgeted items works programmes, especially road maintenance.

All this because, of that monopoly called Qantas / federal government which thinks everyone should go to Armidale.....BUT, How do people get to Armidale????

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What this means in real terms is that the residential ratepayers of Inverell are subsidising 'the fat cats' of society, i.e. the bureaucrats, the businessmen, all of whom can claim taxation deductions for 'business related travel costs' or be re-imbursed by government departments.

This disadvantages the needy, especially in this shire, which is isolated by lack of public transport, is not on a north-south highway, and has a 4% higher than state average of over 65 year olds residing and struggling to pay their home rates and essential costs of living - definately 'no frills'. Students are in a similar position trying to get to distant located campuses.

### EDUCATION

The nation's health systems are on the point of collapse, especially in regard to the supply of general practitioners.

**WHY IS IT THAT STUDENTS FROM INVERELL AND THIS NEW ENGLAND AREA ARE SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED FROM STUDYING MEDICINE AT THE NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY?**

Not forgetting that this is the only university in NSW (and Q'ld) which can be accessed directly by a public transport system.

A weekend announcement by the NRMA recommending that fuel taxes be increased to cover road maintenance will kill off ordinary people being able to afford and run a car - most are maintained to provide transport / access for urgent only medical related needs - social excursions and motoring holidays long since disappeared from most ratepayers in rural and remote areas.

### Background Paper - privatisation of water systems etc.

Considering that the federal and state governments have opted out sometime ago with any funding for the provision of potable water supplies and sewerage treatment systems yet again, dumping the full cost of provision and maintenance of these services onto rural local government shire councils, I fail to see the logic of the statements and 'sell-off' mentality.

No doubt such sell-off, throw the baby out with the bath water mentality, will see further confiscation of ratepayers assets and infrastructure, just like what happened with the electricity industry and seizure of the assets of the very successful North West County Council. And, no doubt costs / shareholder profits will rise dramatically.

### Privatisation

Refer above statements.

whoever wrote the dot points listed under this final page heading has no concept of the reality of 'life in the bush' nor understanding of what is the reality of all the points listed when it comes to living in an isolated community.

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Many valiant, energetic and innovative people have tried very hard to implement new industries - primary and secondary - only to become utterly frustrated when trying to access R&D government support. Both state and federal governments and the mountain of allied bureaucratic obstacles and protracted delays actually kill off most projects.

Free Trade Agreements add another nail in the coffin of any local industry broadening its horizons.

Social stability and community cohesion has been killed off by the impossible cost of insurances and again, impossible red tape.

Social anarchy adds to these problems.

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