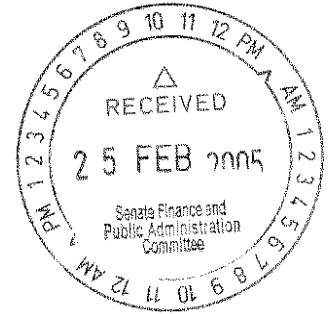


**Beaudesert Rail
Senate Inquiry
Friday 25 February 2005.**



1995 / 1996

- AMH meatworks closed – almost 1000 jobs lost
- Railway ceased to operate
- Disasterous fire gutted town centre
- Youth unemployment 28% as a result of these events
- Community group met to discuss the possibility of re-opening the 43 km branch railway as a means of assisting the shire by way of tourism, boosting existing businesses (catering, bus trips, souvenirs), training in all trades associated with restoring and operating a railway and creating employment.

1997:

- Beaudesert Shire Railway Support Group formed.
- April - Public meeting at Jimboomba.
- July - Petition with 4000 signatures supporting the railway presented to the Minister for Transport, Vaughan Johnson.
- August – Public meeting at Jimboomba.

1998:

- May - public forum held at Beaudesert Railway Station to promote re-opening of the line.
- Heritage submission seeking \$5,000,000. for re-opening the railway.
- Fundraising committee established.

1999:

At a meeting with the CEO of QR, Vince O'Rourke, we were offered encouragement to re-open the railway but told that we would have to do it on our own although QR would support us.

The Group realised that the railway had the following potential:

- Training of unemployed people
- Job creation
- Assistance to shire economic growth
- With QR main line connection at Bethania and 1 million people either end of the line i.e. Brisbane and Gold Coast, this would be the best situated and best connected tourist railway in Australia, better than Puffing Billy which is connected to the Melbourne network at one end only at Belgrave.
- Eventually, a commuter railway could be viable between Jimboomba and Bethania, subject to track re-alignment and upgrade. Initially such a service may use rail buses (modified road vehicles).
- A commuter service could also exist between Bethania and the new satellite development to be known as Yarrabillba, utilising in part the old Canungra railway corridor with connection at Logan Village.
- With a connection to the QR system at Bethania and QIDC land at Beaudesert, the possibility existed (and still exists) for construction of workshops for rail wagon repairs and construction at Beaudesert.
- Closure of the meatworks at Bromelton caused a large area of adjacent land to be available alongside the Brisbane – Sydney standard gauge line. This raised

the possibility of a standard gauge to narrow gauge and vice versa rail and road freight interchange terminal which would be necessary (and still will be necessary) when the present Acacia Ridge terminal becomes too restricted . A 7 km rail line connection would be required between Beaudesert and Bromelton. BR could become a railfreight hook and pull operator.

- BR could become a significant employer in the shire and a great contributor to the shire's economic growth.

Trip on the Gympie Rattler for Beaudesert business people, funded by the Gold Coast and Region Area Consultative Committee. This indicated the type of operation envisaged by Beaudesert Rail.

2000:

- \$76,000 received for preparation of a business and marketing plan.
- Steam locomotive C17 967 purchased.
- Ex QR carriages purchased.
- Second meeting with Vince O'Rourke to report project progress.

2001:

- \$5,000,000 Centenary of Federation grant announced.
- Old Stationmaster's house restored.
- Ex QR railmotor and trailer sourced from Victoria on long term loan basis.
- Ex Park Road station donated for relocation at Logan Village.
- Both candidates from the electorate of Forde promised continuing support and funding for the project.
- Approx 20,000 new sleepers purchased and delivered. Over 200 of these were stolen from the trackside prior to installation.

2002:

- Ex QR railway cottage restored mainly using a local builder and Community Jobs Program trainees.
- Restoration / storage facility built at Beaudesert.
- New steel bridge, locally built and installed across Waters Creek.
- Ex QR turntable purchased from Pinkenba.
- Ex QR rail wagons purchased.
- Ex Emu Bay ex Tasrail diesel hydraulic loco 1105 purchased.
- 43 km of rail track and corridor between Bethania and Beaudesert upgraded by QR and BR staff and CJP trainees.
- Reconditioned Gardner engine purchased for railmotor.
- October – new platform constructed by local builder and CJP trainees.
- December – Restoration of carriages completed by BR staff and CJP trainees.
- December - Committee made aware of cost overrun estimated at \$120,000.
- Planned start up date of mid December delayed due to problems with accreditation and loco completion.
- State Government looking at ways to provide assistance as accounts requiring payment were to be covered from farebox revenue, now delayed.
- First train ran as a santa special at end of December followed by regular running with all outgoings paid from revenue as they were incurred.

2003:

- January – Committee were advised cost blowout to \$500,000 plus a deferred payment to QR.
- Gold Coast A.C.C. and State Government urgently looking at rescue packages.
- “White Knight” appeared and promised to underwrite BR operations for at least one month. This never happened.
- “Friends of the Train” group formed to provide station facilities, on train services, souvenirs, morning and afternoon teas etc with the view of fund raising to assist payment to Creditors.
- Provisional Administrator appointed.
- June - Committee was asked to resign.
- June - Diesel loco derailment, 253 passengers on the train, no injuries but operations suspended pending an enquiry then restricted to Beaudesert - Logan Village with drop in fare revenue.
- October - First bridge fire caused operations to be suspended.
- November - Emerged from provisional liquidation.
- December - operations resumed following bridge repair by QR.

2004:

- July – explosion and grass fire at Gleneagle.
- August – grass and fencing fire at Woodhill which police believe was deliberately lit and which was aimed at a nearby timber rail bridge.
- August - second bridge fire caused operations to be suspended just as revenue was topping \$5,000 in some weeks with many forward bookings.

Costs, approx. as recalled:

Track upgrade by QR	\$3,000,000?
Steam loco	\$500,000.
Diesel loco	\$75,000.
Carriages 8 @ \$30,000	\$240,000?.
Buildings	\$500,000.
Sleepers 20,000@\$25	\$500,000.
Platforms & stations	\$150,000.
Railmotor restoration	?
Tools and equipment	?
Utility vehicle	?
Hi-Rail vehicle	?

Etc.

Significant events:

\$5,000,000 from Centenary of Federation funding – 2001.

December 2002 – January 2003 – realisation of costs overrun.

Commencement of operations early 2003.

Appointment of Provisional Liquidator early 2003.

Derailment of diesel loco June 2003 – ops restricted to Logan Village following enquiry.

First bridge fire – October '03.

Freed from administration November 2003.

Operations resumed to Logan Village – Dec '03.

Second bridge fire August 2004 – ops suspended.

Notes:

- Operations remain suspended pending repairs to the bridge which QR estimates will cost approx \$130,000. It seems significant that each time BR is achieving almost capacity train loads, disaster strikes. Sabotage is suspected and we are informed that the matters of the derailment and incidents of bridge burning are being investigated by the Federal police.
- We are advised that farebox revenue increased from \$1,600 per week in January 2004 to \$3,400 per week in July 2004 with some weeks peaking at \$5,000.
- BR receives income from sources such as advertising hoardings on the rail corridor and rent from several properties. There is immediate potential for filming rights, corporate charters and special on-train functions. There is long term potential for wagon repair and maintenance, commuter and hook and pull operations.
- Almost 150 Community Jobs Program and Work for the Dole workers have received training with Beaudesert Rail. We are told that over 80% of participants have found full time employment, a record.
- The Brisbane - Beenleigh Road 4 lane road rail overpass and associated roadworks at Bethania was not built for the benefit of Beaudesert Rail. It was recognised that in the future, the Beaudesert branch line would become an important transport and commuter corridor.

Almost 10 years on, the aims of Beaudesert Rail are as worthy as they ever were. What has been achieved with relatively small funding for such a project is little short of a miracle. We, the undersigned former members of the Beaudesert Rail Management Committee, sincerely hope that the prodigious effort by so many over the years will not be in vain and that Beaudesert Rail will prosper, repay creditors and achieve its aims for the benefit of the community.

Robert Cawley

Joy Drescher

Alan Robert