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4 March 2009

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANTBERRA ACT 2600

By e-mail rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Senate Inquiry into Public Transport

I refer to your recent invitation to submit comments with respect to the abovementioned Senate Inquiry. I note that the final date for the receipt of submissions was Friday 27 February 2009. I apologise that this submission is provided after this date however it is hoped that its content may still be considered.

Light Regional Council & The Barossa Council

The Light Regional Council and The Barossa Council areas are located approximately 45 km north & north-east (respectively) of the Adelaide CBD within the Outer Metropolitan Area. These Council areas feature the famous Barossa Valley Wine Region, a number of key townships and settlements, prime agricultural land, a variety of agricultural/rural industries and road transport links to the metropolitan area.

Light Regional Council features a section of the metropolitan area (Hewett) within its borders and both Councils share borders with the Town of Gawler, the northernmost part of metropolitan Adelaide and the northern limit of the existing public rail transport system.

Light Regional Council and The Barossa Council both feature a number of townships and settlements of varying sizes and regional significance within their borders. Those of note include Kapunda, Freeling, Roseworthy and Greenock (Light Regional Council) and Angaston, Nuriootpa, Tanunda and Lyndoch (The Barossa Council).

Both Council areas have recently enjoyed an exciting period of economic and social growth which is expected to continue into the future and will dramatically shape the region in coming years.

Census data shows that the population of The Barossa Council grew by 9.1% (1722 persons) between 2001 and 2006 while the population of Light Regional Council grew by 21.7% (2209 persons) in that same period. Regional population growth estimates have been reviewed by the State Government recently to properly account for influencing factors such as job growth, infrastructure improvements, land availability and land affordability considerations. Early indications suggest that the population of the region (which also includes the Town of Gawler and District Council of Mallala in its area) may almost double by 2036 if the influence of all factors is fully realised.

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Key current infrastructure projects that will assist with this growth include the Northern Expressway connecting the Sturt Highway with Port Wakefield Road (expected to be completed in December 2010) and the Sturt Highway Duplication (between Gawler and the Greenock/Nuriootpa junction) which is expected to be completed in June 2010. These completed projects will improve access to Adelaide's northern and western metropolitan suburbs and will provide an additional attraction to prospective residents seeking a lifestyle/commute balance.

There is also the potential to re-introduce passenger rail services to Roseworthy and to extend the Gawler rail network into Concordia (in the western area of the Barossa Council area) as growth progresses in the coming years.

Transport Disadvantage

"Transport Disadvantage", refers to the lack of access some individuals and families have to private transport (such as a motor vehicle) combined with limited access to public transport services. It is generally understood that young people (including children), low-income earners, the aged, the disabled and in some cases women, Indigenous Australians and those living on the fringes of Australian cities can be the most likely community groups to experience transport disadvantage.

Although privately operated bus services are available in the Light Regional and Barossa Council areas (generally also doubling as school buses) they are often infrequent, comparatively expensive (when compared with public transport provided in metropolitan Adelaide) and present challenges for commuters hoping to combine trips with other public transport services (such as scheduled trains departing from Gawler).

Work undertaken by the Barossa Regional Community Transport Scheme in 2006 effectively demonstrated the substantive costs to regional commuters seeking to travel to Adelaide for work or study purposes. This is shown in the table below:

Table 1 - Costs and Distances – Barossa Valley floor to Adelaide

Town	Weekly costs to Gawler (by bus)	Kilometres to Gawler	Kilometres from Adelaide to Gawler	Total distance to Adelaide	Weekly Metro Ticket: Gawler – Adelaide (by train)	Total weekly cost (\$)
Angaston	\$89.60	39	42	81	\$25.10	114.70
Nuriootpa	\$73.60	34	42	76	\$25.10	98.70
Tanunda	\$57.60	29	42	71	\$25.10	82.70
Lyndoch	\$31.20	17	42	59	\$25.10	56.30
Kapunda	\$75.20	33	42	75	\$25.10	100.30

As an example, the median individual weekly income for Light Regional Council in the 2006 Census was \$465. Weekly travel costs for a Kapunda resident travelling to Adelaide by bus and train would represent 21.5% of an individual's average weekly income, compared with 6.1% for a resident of Gawler who travels by public transport to Adelaide for work (based upon the median individual weekly income of \$409 for the Gawler LGA and a weekly Metro Ticket cost of \$25.10).

In another scenario, taking the current Jobseeker allowance provided by Centrelink of \$224.65 per week (single person, no children) as an example (and assuming that this is comparable with 2006 payments), the cost for an unemployed person living in Kapunda to travel to Gawler or Adelaide each day for training would equate to 33.5% and 44.6% of weekly income respectively. Naturally this type of cost significantly limits job prospects and opportunities to access training services (such as TAFE facilities located in Gawler) for these people.

Initiatives

In November 2006 the Barossa Regional Community Transport Scheme requested that the State Government undertake a study into passenger transport to investigate ways of subsidising the transport costs described above. The proposal included a recommendation that the current ticketing system be streamlined so that, for example, a bus patron from Nuriootpa would not be required to purchase an additional ticket to board a train in Gawler. This was proposed as the 'Coach and Rail Ticket' (CART) program, allowing for integration of regional transport with the metropolitan multi-trip system used by Adelaide Metro. It is understood that this initiative was not favoured by the State Government's Passenger Transport Board due to a lack of statistical data to demonstrate a need for this system.

In 2007, the Barossa and Light Regional Development Board and the Barossa Community Transport Scheme conducted community consultation sessions across the Light Regional and Barossa Council areas to inform the development of key priorities for public transport provision.

The key priorities included:

- The production of a comprehensive directory detailing transport services and routes (now available);
- Seeking the extension of the “Trip Planner” service provided by Adelaide Metro into the Barossa and Light region;
- Requesting that the State Government extends the subsidised “Dial-A-Ride” service into the Barossa and Light Regional Council areas;
- Requesting that State Government supports establishing transport interchanges in principle townships to serve the region.

It is understood that while the Directory listed as the first key priority above has been prepared the other initiatives listed have not progressed since this time.

On 20 November 07 Light Regional Council hosted a Community Cabinet at which Council was afforded an opportunity to present five key issues to the State Government’s Cabinet Ministers. One of the issues raised was the need for affordable public transport in this region.

In this forum, Council outlined the following key points:

- Whilst there is a Barossa and Light public transport network it is not patronised well because of the high cost to individuals;
- This area has buses and a growing demand for public transport but does not enjoy the subsidy provided to other fringe metropolitan residents;
- Council would welcome the opportunity to explore equity initiatives to encourage more public transport patronage within our region;
- In the interests of parity and fairness with the services provided to other fringe areas of Adelaide such as Mount Barker (east) and Aldinga (south), Council put forward a recommendation that an outer metropolitan area be created where a weekly ticket could cost \$25.00 to get to the metropolitan area (For example, \$25.00 a week to travel from Kapunda to Gawler, and then another \$25.00 to travel from Gawler to Adelaide – all told \$50.00 a week to travel to Adelaide from the Barossa and Light region).

To date, Council has not received a response from the State Government to this part of its submission.

Council considers that it is important that these issues are raised with all tiers of government in order to highlight the difficulties that some people living on the fringe of our major metropolitan centres are experiencing in accessing day to day services, training and employment opportunities. The buses needed are generally available to assist these people however meeting the cost burden requires government assistance through a subsidy program. Over time (and as growth progresses) further investment in transport (such as reactivating and/or extending rail links) may become necessary however as an interim measure the method described above is respectfully submitted as one reasonable way in which outer metropolitan residents could be greatly assisted to access facilities that are not geographically that far removed but are well beyond their present means.

The Barossa and Light Regional Council areas are expecting to accommodate significant growth over the next 30 years as the State Government has identified northern growth corridors in its strategic planning to accommodate future population growth. It is expected that job growth equating to an additional 160,000 positions will also be realised for Adelaide over this time. Transport provision and access to employment and services will be a critical issue for residents to access the opportunities provided by this regional growth in the future.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Senate Inquiry. Please contact the undersigned on 8525 3200 or at cdoyle@lightsa.gov.au if you wish to discuss these matters further.

Yours faithfully,



Craig Doyle
Principal Project Planner

