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

Investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport
infrastructure and services

(a) In my estimation the state of passenger transport in Australia is woefully inadequate and for people outside the metropolitan areas a forgotten issue. Almost all of housing developments in the Lower Hunter seem to have regarded the provision of good public transport as a non issue. All of the new estates have only provided for private motor vehicles and not for public transport. Two examples illustrating this lack of investment will be given (1) of an ongoing developing area and (2) of a proposed development. The area between Wallsend and Minmi has been an ongoing development for many years. The original road between Wallsend and Minmi was a narrow bitumin road. Now it looks like the main stem of a bunch of grapes with small residential areas hanging off it like berries. A nightmare to plan movements of buses to reasonably service the area. Nodes or roundabouts are too small to allow easy access for buses. Today the local Newcastle Herald trumpeted a \$1.9 billion residential development at Greta/ Branxton know as the Huntley Development. The moans on the radio reports said that no development should take place until the F3 link is established between Seahampton and Branxton. Why? Because the New England Highway could not take the increased traffic! Where is the necessary upgrade of the rail line and stations to take additional commutor traffic?. Not mentioned as the rail system is unable to cope with the coal freight trains.

(b) The above example illustrates the paucity of planning for public transport and the subsequent excess expenditure on private transport. Private motor transport in both cases is a must as there is or will be no investment in public transport. Both the Commonwealth and States should be insisting upon developer contribution towards a decent public transport option in all new developments. Indeed there should not only be environmental impact statements but also infrastucture statements that outline the dollar costs of additional private transport but CO2 impact statements. If no adequate public transport is offered then the development should be either abandoned or the developer needs to plan on a scheme to abateCO2 for the life of the new estate.

(c) Near Holmesville a massive area of new housing is being established called Cameron Park. The provision of cycleways is almost non existant, with no

meaningful paths established to local schools in the area. This has meant the school roads are clogged with parents dropping off or picking up children. In my view both local councils and state governments have been negligent in their responsibility in this matter. Cameron Park is yet another subdivision that has been designed to frustrate planning for adequate public transport with narrow roads not able to accommodate even small buses with safety.

(d) About four or five years ago the then Minister for Transport Michael Costa closed the Lismore to Murwillumbah rail line. The line is near the NSW Qld border. The Queensland government has been slowly moving the rail line down the Gold Coast. I believe one action the Commonwealth government should do would be to re-open the closed line and join it the the southward moving Gold Coast line. This would enable many more passengers to use the existing North Coast line as many holiday in the Gold Coast region.

I believe that there are a number of existing rail lines that are used solely for freight which could be upgraded to passenger standard and used for movement of people. A local example is the privately owned South Maitland rail line to Cessnock. Upgraded to appropriate standard it could be used for a passenger service to both Maitland , Newcastle and through to Sydney. Recently I was in Broken Hill and returned through Cobar to Lake Macquarie. A bus service runs from Broken Hill to Dubbo meeting with an XPT service from Sydney. Why not rail from Cobar to Dubbo and have the coach do the return to Broken Hill and Cobar? I am certain that a rail trip would encourage many people to look at visiting those western towns. I use examples that I am aware of, but I believe that in each state other examples exist.

(e)One of the main areas that would assist public transport in its many guises would be to remove the taxation benefits that accrue to companies such as fringe benefits tax on motor vehicles and the large depreciation writedowns for office motor vehicles.

I thank you for the opportunity to make some of my idears known to the committee.

Yours faithfully

Bernard Griffin