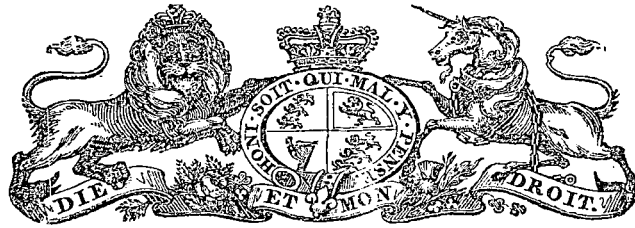


(No. 71.)



1897.

SESSION II.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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RAILWAY EXTENSION ON THE WEST COAST:

MEMORANDUM BY THE GENERAL MANAGER TASMANIAN  
GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS, TOGETHER WITH MAP.

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—£6 10s.



*Tasmanian Government Railways,  
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 25th November, 1897.*

MEMORANDUM FOR HON. MINISTER OF RAILWAYS.

#### RAILWAY EXTENSION.

THE question of railway extension on the West Coast of Tasmania is very much complicated by the concessions granted by the "Waratah-Zeehan Railway Company's Act" to the Company now called the "Emu Bay Railway Company, Limited," as the concessions permit that company to come into competition with the Government railways for the traffic already developed as well as for the traffic which the Railway Department of Tasmania has always looked forward to as specially remunerative to the system of 2-ft. railways, which is now well under way into the the North-Eastern District of the West Coast mineral fields.

I understand that it is the desire of the Government to continue railway construction on the West Coast, and to compete with the Emu Bay Railway Company for carriage of minerals, &c. This, as I pointed out in my reports in the year 1895, can only be carried out by a large reduction in our present rates, and with a very much diminished prospect of profits than would be the case had we not competition with a foreign company.

First of all, one of the most important subjects for consideration is the improvement to Macquarie Harbour Bar. Simultaneously with this work we should continue our 2-ft. line to Rosebery, and here for a while we should pause, giving consideration, however, to the extension of our 2-ft. line to some point on the Western Railway, concerning which I will touch upon later on in this report.

It may be well to consider the result of past railway construction on the West Coast. We have expended in railway construction and equipment, in round figures, say, a quarter of a million of money. The line from Strahan to Zeehan was opened in 1892. In 1894 we carried 20,682 tons of ore; in 1895, 21,013 tons; in 1896, 21,417 tons. This was silver-lead ore, of an average value of, say, £11 a ton, and the railway charges have averaged slightly over five per cent. on the value of the ore. Practically, during the last three years there has not been a marked increase in the amount of ore carried, and whilst there is every prospect of further development in silver-lead ores, it is not likely that there will be an immediate large increase in this direction.

The mines to be developed in the North-Eastern District contain ore of an entirely different character to that which is mined on the Zeehan fields. The ore is pyritic, and of an exceedingly low grade. It is proved beyond doubt that there are enormous beds of low-grade pyritic ore, extending over a large area of country. The value of these ores, however, is too low, I think, to allow of their being exported in bulk; consequently, the development of the mines will be a comparatively slow process. The pyritic ores in the North-Eastern District are said to assimilate the ore now being treated at Mount Lyell, and from such information as is available the value of these large masses of low-grade ore will probably not exceed the value of the ore being mined at Mount Lyell, which I believe approximates £3 a ton. The cost of smelting or reducing ores at Mount Lyell for the half-year ending September last was £1 3s. 3d. per ton. This gives evidence that the North-East Dundas ores will have to be treated on a very large scale, with the best advantages of science and capital.

Up to the present I am not able to learn that very much work has been done beyond proving unquestionably that several claims possess this pyritic ore in exceedingly large quantities. To give force to these views, I would point out that several months ago the Department was taken to task by those interested in the mines for not pushing on with greater despatch, and consequently at a much greater cost, the North-East Dundas line, to enable the ores which had been discovered in the Curtin & Davis group of mines to be brought to market. It was impressed upon us months ago—I think as far back as a year ago—that at the Curtin & Davis mines 1000 tons of ore was waiting transport, and that an enormous quantity of ore would be taken out as soon as there was railway communication. The Department, however, could not see any justification for increasing the cost of the construction of the line. It is now over four months since a station was constructed to serve the Curtin & Davis group, and of the enormous quantity of ore we were told was waiting transport we have up to the present only carried 50 tons. This, I think, confirms the opinion that the ore must be treated *in situ*.

For these reasons, I am of opinion that for the present it will be sufficient for the Government to construct the line to Rosebery, and then wait the development of the mines which will be served by the increased mileage. Should the Rosebery mine and others which are known to contain large bodies of pyritic ore prove a success, or even give ample evidence that they will be a success, the Government may then consider the question of further extension of its 2-ft. gauge for the purpose of opening up other mineral areas.

With regard to a branch from Rosebery to Mount Lyell, I do not think that *at the present moment* the Government would be justified in incurring the expense. Nothing can be carried between these two points except minerals, and although it is known that there are promising shows along that line of country, I think it is advisable to wait until it is ascertained beyond a doubt that the low-grade ores can be profitably treated.

Further developments may justify the construction of this line—we have great hopes that they may do so—but the time is not ripe for extension of our line in the direction indicated.

It has been generally accepted that 2-ft. gauge railways can be made in any part of Tasmania for £2000 per mile, and here it may be of interest to point out that this is a fallacy. The cost of these lines must be governed by the character of the country through which they pass. The line we are constructing, and have almost completed, from Zeehan to Mount Read, varies in cost mile by mile as the character of the country changes. The first mile cost £1262; the second, £1084; third, £1171; fourth, £1104; fifth, £1124; sixth, £1698; seventh, £1748; eighth, £1748; ninth, £2646; tenth, £3643; eleventh, £3493; twelfth, £3393; thirteenth, £3765; fourteenth, £3712. The last few miles are through exceedingly difficult country, with very heavy work—one rock-cutting being 60 ft. in depth—and the rivers and streams have been somewhat expensive to bridge.

I now come to the proposal for extending our line from Rosebery to some point on the Western Line. The objects of such an extension will be twofold. First, it will enable us to some extent to compete with the Emu Bay Railway Company in food supplies and such like on the one hand, and it will assist to open up both mineral and agricultural country on the other hand. An effort should be made to take this continuation to a point as near a deep-water port as possible, and the country indicated in the area coloured green in the map which accompanies this report should be thoroughly examined to find the most suitable route—suitable as being the most economical in construction, and serving the most valuable area of country.

I recommend that no time be lost in making this examination, and that the coming summer should be taken advantage of. If these proposals are acceptable to the Government no further concessions should be granted to syndicate lines, such as are now being applied for from Mole Creek.

The area for examination, you will observe, is in the form of a triangle, having Rosebery for its apex, and its base the Western Line between Chudleigh Junction and Penguin. The red line intersecting the green area bounds the land already settled. It will be observed that nearly half the area through which I propose the extension should be made is already more or less settled—in fact no district is more closely settled, or is producing more per acre, than the country round Sheffield, Barrington, Nook, Promised Land, Paradise, Beulah, and the country immediately surrounding.

Such a line as I have described should carry a daily supply of carcase meat from the western districts to the Dundas and Zeehan fields, as well as all other descriptions of foods which are grown in Tasmania.

In treating of the policy of railway construction the line between Ulverstone and Emu Bay must not be overlooked. The construction of this line would strengthen the power of the Emu

Bay Company to compete with us. Its loss in working and interest would have a marked effect on our net returns, and the advantage to the Colony would, in my opinion, be hardly so great as it seems in many quarters to be anticipated.

Were the Emu Bay Company's line constructed to Zeehan it may be reasonably expected that a large number of Melbourne visitors would travel by that route. The local traffic would be exceedingly limited. At the present time the traffic between Ulverstone and Emu Bay cannot be half what it was five or six years ago. Then, a four-horse coach was frequently insufficient to carry the passengers; now, a two-horse vehicle is very rarely filled. Some idea of the value of the traffic may be gauged by the fact that, putting aside the passengers who take their tickets in Melbourne, and eliminating those who travel at the special cheap fares on particular holiday occasions, the average daily number of passengers who booked at Launceston for Hobart during the past year was 7·58, and the number of passengers who booked at Hobart for Launceston during the same period was 7·93.

In conclusion, I consider that the policy of further railway construction on the West Coast of Tasmania must be guided by the future development of the mines, and by the success of the treatment of the low-grade pyritic ores in that district being assured.

FRED. BACK, *General Manager*.



# MAP OF TASMANIA

NOTE: GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS SHOWN IN RED

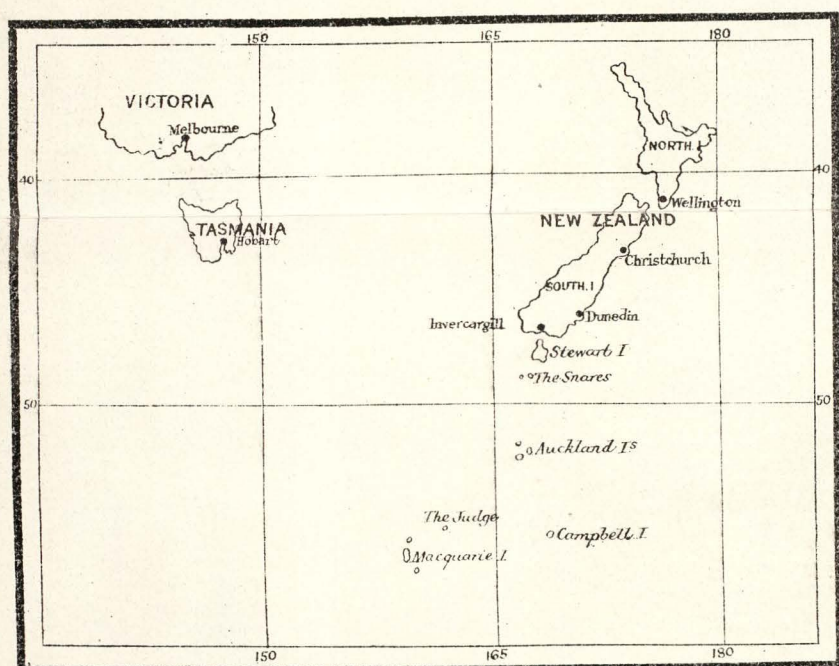
PRIVATE RAILWAYS SHOWN IN BLUE

SCALE 8 MILES TO AN INCH

Note - Proposed extension of Govt Line to Rosebery

- AB Strahan to Zeehan
- BC North East Dundas Tramway
- BD Zeehan Dundas
- BE Proposed Ema Bay Line
- BF Proposed Mole Creek
- \* BG Proposed Line to Hobart \*
- AH McIyell Coy's Railway
- HL Proposed North McIyell Coy's Rd
- \* As shown on plan accompanying report of Select Committee

Note. Approximate Area into which the extension of North East Dundas Line should be continued coloured Green



## CHARACTERISTICS.

Coastline: True, and partially on Tides, and partially on Low Water.  
Railways: Main Lines.  
Distances: True, and partially on Tides, and partially on Low Water.  
Scale: 8 Miles to an Inch.

## SCALES

Natural Scale: 1:316,800.  
Arbitrary Scale: 5 English Statute Miles to an Inch.  
Geographical & Italian Miles 60-1.  
English Statute Miles 60-1.