

(No. 66.)



1899.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

GREAT MIDLAND AND WEST COAST RAILWAY
BILL, 1899, (PRIVATE):

Reports as to alteration of Terminus and effect on proposed Govern-
ment Line through Sheffield to the West Coast.

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

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RAILWAY FROM SHEFFIELD TO WESTERN MINING DISTRICT.

*Tasmanian Government Railways,
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 31st August, 1899.*

MEMORANDUM for W. P. HALES, Esq., Resident Engineer, Strahan.

I HAVE been looking over the plans of the flying survey made by Mr. Reynolds for a line of railway from the Western Line to Rosebery. There does not seem to be any strong reason for making Rosebery, or its immediate vicinity, the terminus of the line.

There seems to be a probability of our having to connect the Red Hills and Tyndall districts with our Railway system. Now, as you have just been through this country, I shall be glad of your opinion as to whether we might not make the Western terminus of the line from Sheffield at a point somewhere near Oceana Station, on the Strahan-Zeehan Railway. The line would probably pass on the north-western side of Mount Tyndall, and serve the Red Hills district.

There are two points which seem to deserve attention: first, that by making the proposed change we would save a good many miles of parallel running with the Emu Bay Railway; and, secondly, we should open up the Red Hills district without the cost of a separate line. If the Government were to decide to make the line through from Sheffield, work could be begun at both ends simultaneously.

Kindly let me have your views on this matter.

FREDK. BACK, *General Manager.*

*Tasmanian Government Railways,
Launceston, September 5th, 1899.*

MEMORANDUM for F. BACK, Esq., General Manager.

IN reply to your memo. of 31st August, No. 2604. There is no strong reason for making Rosebery or its immediate vicinity the terminus of the line. It seems to me of vital importance that the Government railways on the West Coast should be connected with the main system of the Colony, and that in determining the route of this line the above object should be kept in view. The line indicated on Mr. Reynolds' map and report of 13th June would be quite close to and parallel to the Emu Bay Company's Railway from their Pieman River Bridge to Rosebery, a distance of about five miles. If the line were extended to join the North-East Dundas Tramway at Fahl Ore, as surveyed by the Railway Department, it would be alongside the Emu Bay Company's line to Zeehan, now under construction, for a further distance of seven or eight miles. By the Rosebery route the features of the country would thus compel us to run alongside the Emu Bay Railway for 12 or 13 miles. This would very materially reduce the volume of expected traffic on this portion of the line. Your proposal to make the Western terminus of the line from Sheffield at a point somewhere near Oceana, on the Strahan-Zeehan Railway, seems to me an excellent one, and worthy of a careful examination. A practicable line can be got from Oceana to the Red Hills district, as previously reported, the terminus being between Mount Tyndall and Mount Murchison. From thence the route would probably be south and east of Mount Murchison to some suitable point on Mr. Reynolds' line. For this portion a reconnaissance survey would be necessary.

Mr. Reynolds' maps (3) are returned under separate cover.

W. P. HALES.

*Tasmanian Government Railways,
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 13th September, 1899.*

MEMORANDUM for W. P. HALES, Esq., Strahan.

REFERRING to your memo. of the 5th instant, replying to mine of the 31st ultimo, on the subject of the railway from Sheffield to the Western Mining District, I shall be glad if you will instruct Mr. Reynolds to continue his flying survey through the Tyndall and Red Hills districts, to see whether connection can be made with his survey from Sheffield to Rosebery. Probably it will be found possible to accomplish this by crossing the Sophia River near Lake Sophia. However, Mr. Reynolds is in a very much better position than I am to recommend what is to be done.

FREDK. BACK, *General Manager.*

*Tasmanian Government Railways,
General Manager's Office, Hobart, 26th September, 1899.*

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS.

IN reply to your request that I should express an opinion as to the operation of a new clause (No. 15) proposed to be inserted in the above Act, I may say that there is a decided objection to a company receiving permission to construct a line to terminate at Mount Tyndall. It would come into direct competition with the contemplated line of railway from Oceana Junction (Argenton) to the Red Hills. Until quite recently, the eastern side of the Western Mining Division has been practically unknown country, unsurveyed and unexplored. The survey party which we have out, and the examinations which have been made of some parts of the country, have given us now some reliable data; and I have come to the conclusion that if a line be constructed by the Government from Barrington, Sheffield, and the Wilmot on the one side, it should be taken through to Mount Tyndall and the Red Hills on the other side. There is at the present moment quite as much justification for constructing a tramway to the Red Hills district as there was when we commenced to construct the line to Mount Read, which, I am glad to say, has been of great benefit to the community, carrying at the present time some 300 tons of ore a week, which quantity will soon be largely increased. If it be decided to construct a line of railway from Oceana Junction to the Red Hills on the one side, and from Barrington, Sheffield, and the Wilmot on the other side, these two works could go on simultaneously, and in course of time be connected to form a through line from the Strahan-Zeehan Railway to the Mersey Line.

I attach hereto copies of correspondence which has taken place between Mr. Hales and myself on the subject. Mr. Hales has examined the Red Hills country, and you will see from his report that he is entirely in accord with my views.

If it is the policy of the Government to grant a concession to construct a private railway from some point on the Chudleigh Line to the Western mining field, the terminus at the latter place should, I think, be Gormanston. I am bound to say that any private railway so constructed must, more or less, compete against and take away the traffic of the Government Railway. If the line carries a portion of the traffic from the field, it must take away such traffic from other lines of railway.

As an example of this, we have the competition in New Zealand between the Rimutaka Government Line and the Manawatu private Company's Line. These two lines have their *termini* in the city of Wellington, whence they travel for many miles on either side of an impassable mountain range. As the crow flies, the average distance apart of the two lines will be about 30 miles. We find at the present moment that there is an acute competition for traffic between the two railways; and the extremely costly line which was built over the Rimutaka Ranges by the Government is now a non-paying line, owing to the diversion of traffic by the private company known as the Manawatu Railway Company.

I may perhaps be permitted to point out that if the Promoters' Engineer is allowed to use the maximum grades and the minimum curves as frequently as he may elect to do, the value of the line will be lessened very materially, and the result will be the construction of a cheap surface line instead of a line equal in all respects to the other 3 ft. 6 in. gauge lines in the Colony, the property of the Government. I think this a matter which should be left to the discretion of the Minister and the engineer appointed by the Minister to supervise the work.

I ask permission again to remind you of the very great importance of having a survey made and line located before an Act of Parliament is given to any company to construct a railway. It has been urged that this would be expensive; but, after all, what are two, three, or five thousand pounds in an undertaking which is to cost a million? I do not think that anywhere would a concession be granted such as now asked for without a survey. It is on record that the legal expenses alone of the South-Eastern Railway cost a quarter of a million, in addition to the cost of survey fees, before the Company obtained their Act; and the line, when the Act was passed, was of no greater length than that which is now under consideration.

FREDK. BACK, *General Manager.*