

Deborah Collings

**Submission to:**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 'B'  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY**

I tender this submission as a private person and as a neighbouring resident of the North-East railway corridor for the past fifteen years. I am also a member of NERAF Inc. (North-east Residents and Farmers) and a supporting member of L&NER (Launceston and North-East Railway). My concerns regarding proposals for future uses of the corridor are both personal and in relation to the wider public interest.

Regarding the feasibility of the proposed Scottsdale-Lilydale Falls rail trail, many doubts have been expressed about the lack of substantiation of purported usage figures, as well as access to a starting point, safety near steep drop-offs and at road intersections, plus provision of rubbish and toilet facilities, maintenance costs and the expected economic returns. These issues have yet to be satisfactorily addressed by the proponents of a bike trail.

With regard to the feasibility of the proposed Lilydale-Turners Marsh tourism railway it would appear the physical limitation of allocating only a minor portion of the railway line to this project is destined to condemn it to failure, due to removing access to the tunnel and Denison Gorge as well as the existing historical terminus of the line. The town of Scottsdale and the surrounding region have much to gain from the resurrection of the railway and provision of a heritage tourism service while at the same time preserving the line as a valuable asset for future potential commercial uses when local rural and manufacturing industries go through another evolution as they have in the past.

Having attended a presentation about the successful restoration of the non-profit volunteer-run Yarra Valley Railway in Victoria, I am convinced that the Launceston and North-East Railway (L&NER) organisation would be able to produce an equally successful enterprise, given the NE railway line is in significantly better condition and the necessary community interest and support is also being demonstrated in funding and in donations of time, materials and skilled labour. When I hear unfounded criticisms of the ability of L&NER to provide a heritage railway service, e.g. that it would cost too much to restore the line, or that insurance is unaffordable, or that volunteers cannot run a railway, then it seems that critics are saying that North-east Tasmanians are not able to achieve what has been clearly possible elsewhere in Tasmania, as well as in many places in Australia and overseas. This is clearly insulting the abilities and intelligence of the committed Tasmanians who can see the potential for such a service and are willing to get behind it and show their practical support.

The grass-roots campaign to save the railway line has galvanised the north-eastern community and brought together neighbours and new friends in a concerted effort to preserve our industrial heritage and provide a new recreational opportunity accessible to everyone. A heritage rail experience will complement existing services, linking Launceston with attractions in Scottsdale and beyond, as well as providing a catalyst for new business ventures in tourism and recreation. The proposal for a tourist railway should be allowed to demonstrate its viability over the whole of the existing corridor and be given enough time to establish a service that expands over time as resources and capabilities grow.

The remaining issues in my submission to this inquiry relate to "any other matters incidental thereto", in particular the assessment process arising from the original proposal to convert the railway to a bike trail and which appears to have disregarded the many neighbouring residents of the rail corridor, who are likely to be most affected by such a substantial change of use of the land.

My grazing property at Karoola has approximately one kilometre of railway frontage and I have lived there since freight trains were still running on the line. When the line was closed in 2004 it was used by occasional maintenance vehicles but it also began to attract walkers, some with dogs, as well as noisy motor bike riders often using my driveway without my permission in order to access the line. I have also had problems with people throwing rocks from the railway line into my paddocks and at my livestock, leaving gates open that would allow animals to escape onto the road and intruders into the back of my property for the purpose of hunting with a dog. I fear that the conversion of the railway to a bike trail would only increase the loss of privacy and trespass onto my property with the ease of accessibility and openness provided by a public right of way. There are also great concerns regarding increased opportunities for more serious criminal activities such as theft and arson. These concerns are shared by many of the several hundred residents who live alongside the entire NE railway corridor and have not been given appropriate consideration by supporters of the proposed bike trail nor taken into serious account by the Tasmanian Government when assessing the proposal. In contrast, I would welcome the return of railway trains to allow the line to be used for the purpose for which it was built and for which it is still eminently suited and viable. Although the section of the line adjoining my home has been saved for continued use as a railway, I wish to convey these concerns on behalf of those residents who are still threatened by the possibility of conversion of the upper portion to a bike path.

Many Tasmanians have historical family associations with the railway, or memories of seeing and travelling on trains on the Scottsdale line and do not wish to see this valuable infrastructure lost from the State. A tourist rail venture in NE Tasmania would be part of a state-wide collection of railway services which are already attracting many railway enthusiasts and everyday visitors who wish to enjoy a heritage rail experience through our beautiful countryside. However it needs to have access to the entire length of the line to be viable for the future. I trust the Committee will give the tourist train proposal the fair hearing that Tasmanians deserve in weighing up the benefits of using the entire rail corridor before these valuable assets and infrastructure are destroyed. Therefore I would urge the Tasmanian Government to reconsider its decision to divide the North-Eastern railway line into two unviable segments and support the proposal for a tourist railway from Turners Marsh to Scottsdale.

Yours sincerely,  
Deborah Collings