

## BRIDGWATER BRIDGE INQUIRY      FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Are there any cheaper alternatives to a bridge at the site of the present crossing?
  - A. The four lane Bowen bridge, paid for by the Commonwealth in anticipation of a successful damages claim in relation to the "Lake Illawarra" disaster is about 10 kilometres downstream from Bridgwater and is connected to the Brooker Highway by a recently and very expensively upgraded road junction complex. There is a network of rural roads, some of them upgraded following the Tasman bridge collapse, joining the Eastern landing of the Bowen bridge to the Midland highway, but no rail connection would be practicable.
2. What is "airdraft"?
  - A. Airdraft is the distance between the waterline of a vessel at Mean High water (tide) and the highest part of the vessel (usually the top of its mast or funnel).
3. The government response to arguments for the retention of a rail crossing is to keep the existing lift bridge . What is wrong with this?
  - A. The foundations of the existing bridge are reliably reputed to be in a very fragile condition, and sooner rather than later the bridge will be unusable for any form of traffic. When this happens, any substitute crossing will require extensive connective shore works on both sides of the river to make good any substitute crossing ( assuming that one is possible at all)
4. Why are you involved in this project?
  - A. When I was a child travelling from Sydney to Melbourne I have a vivid memory of leaving the Sydney train in the middle of the night and helping my mother drag our luggage from one end to the other of the very long Albury Station so that we could board the Melbourne train waiting at the far end. I never want to see a repeat of the break of gauge fiasco perpetrated on us by the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century State politicians, and this project has all the hallmarks of that type of decision, in particular the failure to accommodate a rail crossing .Further , I remain shocked at the cost of the present bridge proposal.
5. What are the obvious technical problems for a tunnel at the present river crossing site?
  - A. The width of the river crossing is a little less than 300 metres and allowance must be made for the approaches. The river is quite deep at this point, so it is unlikely that a precast tunnel could simply sit on the bottom, as is the case with the Sydney Harbour road tunnel. However Sydney has overcome the same problem with its tunnels for its recently completed new public transport rail network crossing the harbour at a number of points and it is for this reason that I am advocating a referral of the tunnel concept for assessment by currently experienced engineering professionals, before it is too late for a rethink.

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