



2019

Parliament of Tasmania

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE "B"

FINAL REPORT

ON

Tasmania's North East Railway Corridor

Members of the Committee

Hon Rosemary Armitage (Chair)
Hon Robert Armstrong (Deputy Chair)
Hon Ivan Dean MLC
Hon Craig Farrell MLC (to 21 May 2019)
Hon Jane Howlett MLC
Hon Sarah Lovell MLC (substituted for Hon Jo Siejka MLC)
Hon Tania Rattray MLC

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To inquire into and report upon tourism opportunities provided by the *Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Act 2016* in relation to Tasmania's North East Railway Corridor with particular reference to —

1. the feasibility of the proposed Scottsdale-Lilydale Falls rail trail;
2. the feasibility of the proposed Lilydale-Turners Marsh tourism railway;
3. the feasibility, funding, future management and maintenance of any tourism developments on the North East Railway Corridor; and
4. any other matters incidental thereto.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATHRA	Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia Inc.
ATSB	Australian Transport Safety Bureau
FRONZ	Federation of Rail Organisations, New Zealand
LDPA	Lilydale District Progress Association
L&NER	Launceston and North East Railway
NERAF	North East Residents and Farmers Inc.
NERT	North East Recreation Trail Inc.
NTD	Northern Tasmanian Development
NSRF	National Stronger Regions Fund
ONRSR	Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator

CHAIR FOREWORD

On behalf of the Legislative Council Sessional Committee B, I am pleased to present the North East Railway Corridor Inquiry Report. The Inquiry was established by resolution of Government Administration Committee "B". As with any Committee of the Parliament and subsequent report tabled, the Committee expects this Report will be a useful source of information.

This Inquiry was established in order to provide an open public forum for the ongoing community concerns surrounding both the rail trail and tourist rail proposals. It was also intended to address some of the contradictory information that had been in circulation in relation to both proposals, in order to provide clarity for the purposes of making an informed decision.

As background, funding of \$1.47 m for a North East Rail Trail was announced by then Federal Member for Bass Andrew Nikolic in May 2015 to convert the disused north east rail line into a trail for cyclists. Concern was then raised by many rail enthusiasts at the loss of the existing rail infrastructure, notwithstanding that the rail line had not been used for many years, and a proposal was put forward to run a heritage tourist railway. Passions have run high with committed groups doing an enormous amount of work to put forward and substantiate their proposals.

Consequently, this report endeavours to reflect the sincere aspirations of all who have made representations for either the rail trail or tourist train proposals. The Committee has therefore taken a comprehensive line of considerations into account throughout the Inquiry: economic, environmental and social, amongst many others.

On behalf of the Committee I thank all individuals and organisations who participated in the Inquiry, put in submissions and attended hearings. I especially recognise Dunedin Councillor Kate Wilson, CEO Dunedin Railways Craig Osborne, Brett Whelan of the Yarra Valley Railway, Damian McCrohan, President RailTrails Australia and the Office of the National Rail Regulator staff along with TasRail who provided an opportunity to firsthand experience sections of the rail corridor, together with an informative report.

The Committee also acknowledges the valuable contribution of a former member of this Committee the Hon. Craig Farrell, now President of the Legislative Council.

In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude to Mrs Natasha Exel (Committee Secretary), Julie Thompson and other Legislative Council and Parliamentary Staff for their excellent and tireless support.



Rosemary Armitage
Inquiry Chair

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. The North East Rail Corridor runs for 64 kilometres between Coldwater Creek and Scottsdale. The last passenger train ran in 1978 and the line was closed to freight in 2005. The Corridor is currently managed by TasRail.
2. Dorset Council announced a proposal to develop the section of North East Rail Corridor between Coldwater Creek and Scottsdale into a multi-use recreation trail. Dorset Council advised that it had secured a funding commitment of \$1.47 million from the Australian Government through its National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) to convert the North East Railway line into a rail trail. A condition of the funding is that the NSRF funded component of the project be completed by 31 December 2019. This funding had been granted in previous years and had been extended.
3. The Tasmanian Government announced that it supported Dorset Council's initiative and, consequently, introduced the *Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Bill 2016*. The purpose of the Bill was to allow transition of corridors from railways to recreational uses, provide a framework for their future management and arrangements for adjacent landholders. The Bill was also designed to be applied retrospectively to the Scottsdale to Billycock Hill section of the railway line that had already been converted to a rail trail by the Rotary Club of Scottsdale.
4. The Bill made provision for continued ownership of rail corridors by the Crown and vested any corridor land not owned by the Crown, in the Crown. The legislation can be accessed at:
<https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2016-050>.
5. Following Dorset Council's announcement of its proposal to develop a rail trail, a group named Launceston and North East Railway (L&NER) was formed. L&NER presented an alternative proposal to develop a heritage tourist railway on the North East Rail Corridor.
6. The Committee notes that, although the proposed railway has been referred to as a 'heritage railway', it could also be represented as a tourist railway. It has nevertheless been referred to as 'heritage railway' for the purposes of this Report.
7. The Government consequently tasked the Department of Treasury and Finance to conduct an assessment of the feasibility of both proposals. The subsequent report of the Department of Treasury and Finance (Government Submission Attachment B) found that both proposals had the capacity to generate economic and employment benefits in the region.

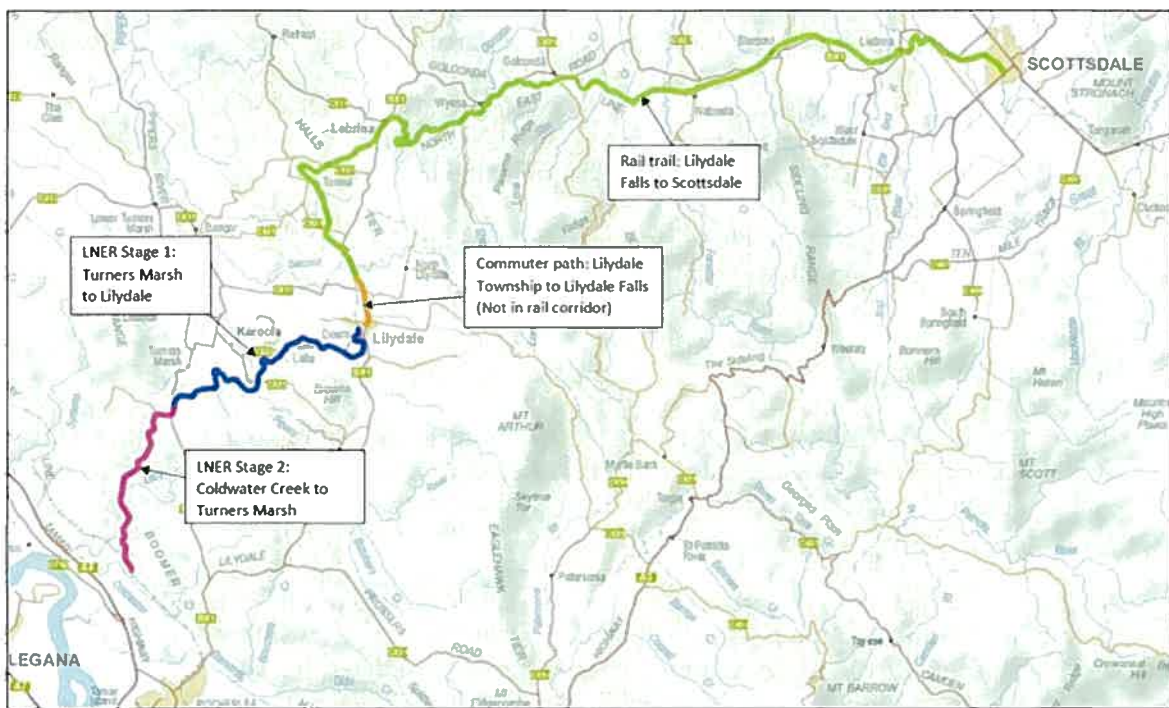
8. The Government announced that it wished for both projects to have the opportunity to proceed and would allocate sections of the line accordingly (referred to in this Report as the Government's compromise solution):

The Scottsdale to Lilydale Falls section of the north-east rail line be utilised for the purpose of establishing the rail trail project for cyclists. Subject to funding and planning approval a cycle trail will be established adjacent to the road between Lilydale Falls and Lilydale township.

The heritage rail proposal be offered a two stage pathway initially beginning on the 12.5 kilometre section of the north-east rail line, running from Turners Marsh to Lilydale for establishing the heritage rail project.

Subject to successful completion of this first stage a future corridor expansion to Coldwater Creek to access TasRail's operational Launceston to Bell Bay line be considered as stage two.¹

Figure 1: Map of the Government's proposed allocation of the NE Rail Corridor



North-East Rail Corridor (Indicative)

¹ Written submission, Government of Tasmania, p.1

Establishment of the Inquiry

9. Proponents of the heritage rail proposal expressed concerns that the Government's proposed compromise solution of a tourist railway between Turners Marsh to Lilydale was an insufficient length of line and would miss major attractions such as the Denison Gorge and the tunnel at Tunnel. The Inquiry was proposed as a result of these concerns.
10. In October 2018, the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee B resolved to inquire into the potential future use of the North East Rail Corridor.
11. Parliament was prorogued on 28 January 2019. The Inquiry was re-established by Order of the Legislative Council on 19 March 2019.
12. Sixty-three submissions were received. Public hearings were held in Launceston on 5 & 6 February and 16 & 17 April 2019, Victoria on 8 May 2019, New Zealand on 10 May 2019 and in Hobart on 20 and 30 May 2019. Forty-three individuals, representing either themselves or 20 groups or organisations, provided verbal evidence at these hearings.
13. The Committee undertook field trips to the Yarra Valley in Victoria and the south island of New Zealand in order to examine best-practice models of railways and rail trails in other jurisdictions. The Committee also travelled on a section of the North East Rail Corridor between Turners Marsh and Wyena, courtesy of TasRail, in order to view features of the track and related infrastructure.
14. The Final Report of the Inquiry should be read in conjunction with all transcripts, submissions and tabled documents.

Recent developments

15. In June 2019, Dorset Council erected signs in three locations along the North East Rail Corridor to identify the North East Recreation Trail. This was regarded by a number of people as a deliberately provocative act that created further divisiveness, particularly as the Inquiry was still underway.²
16. The Committee received a considerable amount of technical evidence regarding the condition of the North East Rail line infrastructure. Some of this evidence was contradictory. The Committee therefore decided to defer to a report provided by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR), acknowledging that this is the authority that would ultimately make any determination as to whether the line was fit for purpose. A full copy of the National Rail Regulator's Report is provided in Appendix 2. The Committee notes the advice of the National Rail Regulator that the Report should not be considered a comprehensive report of the complete corridor but that it provides useful information on typical infrastructure condition and works required to enable railway operations to commence.

² Taylor Clyne, 'Provocative new cycle sign', North-Eastern Advertiser, 26 June 2019, p.1

FINDINGS

1. There has been a lack of consultation in the process to develop the North East Rail Trail. Early community consultation would have reduced the divisiveness the issue has generated.
2. The North East rail line is part of Tasmania's rail history.
3. Rail trail and heritage tourist railway both have the potential to generate economic benefits for Tasmania.
4. Heritage rail tourism and rail trails are both growing in popularity world-wide.
5. A co-located (side-by-side) rail trail and heritage railway is not achievable for the entire length of the North East Rail Corridor.
6. Rail trails provide a safe and accessible environment for all levels of cyclists and other users.
7. Concerns raised by some adjacent landholders were not supported in other jurisdictions where rail trails have been established.
8. Landholders engaged in specialised activities could be affected by unscheduled rail trail users.
9. A heritage railway extending beyond Lilydale to Scottsdale would be challenging and expensive to develop due to the length of the line, bridge repairs, additional ancillary costs and the requirement to install level crossings, all to the required standards of the National Rail Safety Regulator.
10. Rail trails and heritage railways can be complementary to each other.
11. Both the proposed heritage railway and rail trail will rely heavily on volunteers to operate and undertake maintenance.
12. A successful heritage railway would ideally have departure and destination points that access population hubs and have facilities, or the potential for facilities to be established.
13. Turners Marsh and Coldwater Creek are not ideal departure and destination points for a heritage railway due to lack of facilities, access and services.
14. As departure and destination points, Launceston and Lilydale have existing facilities that could cater for railway passengers.
15. Heritage railway journeys do not necessarily need to be of a long duration to be successful.
16. It is not envisaged that the North East Rail Corridor will be used for the purpose of freight transportation in the foreseeable future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government -

1. Require any future proposals to convert railway lines to rail trail undergo thorough community consultation with all stakeholders.
2. Provides a leadership role in bringing all parties together to form a cooperative arrangement.
3. Supports the establishment of a heritage railway between Launceston and Lilydale and negotiate with TasRail for access, as necessary, to the section of rail line between Launceston and Turners Marsh.
4. Continue to support the Scottsdale to Lilydale Falls rail trail proposal.
5. Supports initiatives to establish a heritage railway between departure and destination points that are accessible and provide suitable facilities for passengers.
6. Ensures that, where possible, the rail trail is co-located within the rail corridor and that rail infrastructure is not removed unless necessary for construction of the rail trail.
7. Ensures that any sections of the North East Railway that are not repurposed for use as a rail trail be retained where safe to do so particularly the section of line between Lilydale and Wyena in order that this section of line could be restored in future in the event that a heritage train becomes viable.
8. Commits to making any serviceable railway materials recovered available to Tasmania's tourist/heritage rail sector, with priority given to L&NER, as part of the Rail Corridor management agreement, in the event that sections of the North East Rail Corridor are converted to a rail trail.
9. Ensures that any development on the North East Rail Corridor should include interpretation that acknowledges the Corridor's railway heritage.

EVIDENCE

TOR1: FEASIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED SCOTTSDALE-LILYDALE FALLS RAIL TRAIL

Opportunities for the North East region

- 1.1 The written submission of the North East Rail Trail Inc. (NERT), the community based, non-profit group formed to promote the rail trail proposal, provided the following list of benefits of a north east rail trail:

NERT firmly believes that the Recreation Trail project has the potential to provide significant benefit, in many forms. Most of these are well covered in the referenced report [2] and [5]. A summary of these would be:

- *Amenity: Free and safe access to cycle or walk through countryside and settlements away from traffic and other annoyances.*
- *Accessibility: Gradients are gentle, allowing ease of use by people of all ages and almost all abilities.*
- *Visitor Incentive: Rail Trails cover significant distances thus allowing for multi-day traverses. This attracts visitor from out of the district looking for an easy-paced, active and varied outdoor holiday experience, one that enables deep immersion in the countryside and communities.*
- *Potential: Rail Trail use is growing rapidly world-wide with significant social, health and amenity benefit to local residents. It is also a growing attraction for visitors looking for 'slow' and 'low emissions' holiday breaks.*
- *Economic Benefit: Rail Trail users stop at will and linger, effectively spreading the commercial benefit to any point along the trail where someone is prepared to provide a service/hospitality/retail.*
- *Established rail trails are financially independent and well managed. Although voluntary labour and donations are important sources of support, rail trails need not be dependent on these resources.*
- *The considerable employment generated from the growth in small business along the trail is gainful employment. Volunteering may be good for community cohesion but only a growth in gainful employment can future proof rural communities that struggle to remain viable as traditional forms of rural employment continue to diminish.*
- *Rail trails enhance value in the community (both property and lifestyle).*

The NERT position regarding the most effective and workable future use of the North-East Rail Corridor is clearly articulated in the Discussion Paper: Options for the Development of both the North East Recreation Trail and Heritage Rail, March 2018, Reviewed October 2018.

NERT strongly believes that the best fit scenario would be:

1. *A Heritage Rail service operating between Launceston and the Austins Road and Pipers River Road junction at Turners Marsh.*

2. *A walking and cycling recreation trail from Turners Marsh through to Scottsdale connecting with the existing North-East Rail Trail.*³

- 1.2 NERT also advised that it planned to raise funds through a business partner program, corporate and individual membership, sponsorship, events, sales of merchandise and donation boxes.⁴ NERT advised that, as of May 2019, it had funds of \$31,813 and that the cost of maintaining the rail trail would be approximately \$110 per km per annum.⁵

- 1.3 The Government provided the following information in its written submission:

*Several studies have found that successful rail trails can provide very significant economic benefits to local communities. For example, a recent New Zealand study by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment estimated that, for the 22 Great Rides in New Zealand, the annual economic benefits were \$NZ 37.4 million. Key businesses to benefit were tourism accommodation, shops and cafes, guided tours, cycle shops and bike hire companies, and shuttle providers. The report also found that the trails helped revitalise smaller communities. The annual value of social benefits was estimated at a further \$NZ 12.0 million.*⁶

- 1.4 However, the Government submission's attached 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposals' prepared by the Department of Treasury and Finance noted that, with respect to a Tasmanian rail trail:

*There is less certainty over the level of benefits. There has been no market research to assess the likely level of demand for the North-East Rail Trail. There are also not other rail trails in Tasmania which would provide a guide to the level of likely future demand.*⁷

- 1.5 Cr Barrie Wills of Central Otago Council, New Zealand, provided information on New Zealand's experience to the Inquiry:

*Basically what's happened with the rail trail and with the other walking and cycling trails around here is they've breathed a hell of a lot of life into our smaller rural communities and that has really helped a lot. We have a nice community here like Alexander and Cromwell, et cetera. It is generally pretty well self-sustained, but a lot of those rural communities were going backwards. There has been a real turnaround.....It has been a big positive for this region.*⁸

³ Written submission 25, NERT, p.3-4

⁴ Written submission 40c, Dorset Council, Attachment C, p.2-3

⁵ Tabled Document, NER 21, NERT, p.1

⁶ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment B, 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposal', Department of Treasury and Finance, p.8

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Hansard transcript, Barrie Wills, 10 May 2019, p.1-2

- 1.6 In a written submission, Di Elliffe drew the Inquiry's attention to the popularity of rail trails in Victoria and New Zealand:

We can confirm how busy and popular the Victorian and NZ rail trails are. They are a real destination and drawcard for many tourists from all countries. Getting some pleasant exercise while enjoying scenes of mountains and pastures, and being able to stop regularly for locally produced wines, Devonshire teas, souvenirs, and meals, is a totally enjoyable way to holiday.

We observed many local growers, artisans and small towns being energised and reinvigorated by the additional slow moving tourist trails. People on bikes stop more often, spend more on food, drink, clothes and accommodation, and interact more with the locals. It is much more social and intensive than car-based tourism. A rail trail between Lilydale and Scottsdale will prove a great boon for the farmers and (current and potential) local businesses along the route.⁹

- 1.7 A similar view was expressed by Marie Spencer:

Around the world lines which have found to be uneconomic and redundant have breathed new life into the surrounding communities as thousands of friendly, cashed-up bike riders flock to enjoy the challenge of moving under their own steam, enjoying local food and wine, beers and natural beverages and meeting the people. They stay in the complete range of accommodation from tents to high end units, farm stays and bed and breakfasts. They travel slowly and spend more time in a region than just a one day train trip. But the Trail will not just attract overseas visitors, local residents and other Tasmanians will use the trail daily for exercise and enjoyment of the wonderful mix of forest and farmland that the trail will wind through.¹⁰

- 1.8 In their written submission, John and Lesley Gallagher of Cherry Top Farmstay stated:

Our Farmstay boundaries the North-East line. We think it would transform our family business enabling us to continue to live here, our plan is to employ help as we get older too. We just invested \$100,000 hard earned on a bathroom for campers and a third accommodation. We believe a recreation trail between 2 towns will be a great drawcard for touring cycling and whole heartedly accept the government's compromise solution.¹¹

- 1.9 During hearings, local farmer Mike Scott made the point that rail trails would provide access to the Tasmanian countryside:

....one of the things I loved about the country (UK) I used to live in is the free, unfettered access to the countryside. I could go across that road, over the stile and walk. It is something I cannot do here. Is it important to everyone there? It is something that just has existed; it is historical, embedded in the

⁹ Written submission 16, Di Elliffe, p.1

¹⁰ Written submission 18, Marie Spencer, p.1

¹¹ Written submission 1, Cherry Top Farmstay, p.1

*countryside - free and complete access everywhere, footpaths, bridleways, they are there. We do not have it here and we really miss this. It makes a completely different culture in terms of how small rural communities relate to the farming enterprises around them.*¹²

- 1.10 Collin Burns, Executive Officer of Cycling Tasmania, made the following statement:

*If you have the infrastructure, people will start up the businesses. Have a trail head similar to Derby. There is a shop there and they hire the bikes. At Lilydale, have the hire bikes. People can go and ride the trail and ride through the tunnel. It will create new experiences. There are opportunities there for new businesses.*¹³

- 1.11 Tania Murphy, Manager of the Otago Central Rail Trail, advised:

*The other thing is too that people arriving on the train stop where the train stops. People who are on cycles can stop anywhere they like and they can also veer off to go to those other side activities or towns. They are not limited by where that train stops so the opportunity in a commercial sense is far greater.*¹⁴

- 1.12 Mark and Sarah Hirst, of Leaning Church Vineyard, in their written submission stated:

The principal reason is that rail trails are considered "slow tourism", enabling every walker and cyclist to visit every attraction along the way, whether an art gallery, a cellardoor, an olive oil tasting facility, a berry farm, an antique store or a supermarket.

New businesses will open to service the cycling market, such as more cafes, pubs, B&Bs, bike hire and bike servicing facilities and more.

Our vineyard is located about 200 metres from the rail corridor just off Lalla Road on Brooks Road. There is no doubt that we support the option of an estimated 30,000 cyclists meandering towards our vineyard with the opportunity for each and every cyclist to visit our cellardoor for tastings and for lunch, ensuring that we are able to employ more locals and offer a unique and memorable visitor experience.

These cyclists will then stay at local B&Bs, eat in local restaurants, purchase wine to be shipped home, enjoy local beverages at the local pubs, hire bikes from local businesses, and importantly share their amazing experiences with the world to grow word-of-mouth brand awareness of our region.

They spend their money in the region over three to five days as they cycle along the corridor, not on a train ticket that results in a quick one-day visit to the

¹² Hansard transcript, Mike Scott, 6 Feb 2019, p34

¹³ Hansard transcript, Collin Burns, 5 Feb 2019, p.38

¹⁴ Hansard transcript, Tania Murphy, 10 May 2019, p.4

*region (no accommodation, maybe one meal, maybe a visit to three selected businesses).*¹⁵

- 1.13 Malcolm Reed, representing Tasmanian Bicycle Users Group, stated that the economic benefits would take a number of years to materialise:

It is not going to be an overnight miracle; I acknowledge that. I have spoken to business owners in Tallarook at the beginning of the southern Goldfield Trail, for example, and also in Bright and around the north-east trails of Victoria. It wasn't an overnight success. It has taken five to 10 years of development and marketing, but they are absolutely committed to it now and their town economies are to a very large extent based around that.

And

*This project is shovel-ready to go. The funding is there. All that is needed is the development applications, the permits and so on, and the corridor can be reused. There is a backlog of pent-up demand. We know people out there are waiting to ride this trail. From my own experience I know there is a list of iconic rail trails around the world that people want to ride. For example, the Carrilet in Spain and the Galloping Goose in Canada. It is like golf courses - there are iconic golf courses everyone wants to play and there are iconic rail trails people want to ride around the world. People have a bucket list of them.*¹⁶

- 1.14 However, Robert Ravens, Managing Director of Bridestowe Estate did not believe that a rail trail would be popular with international visitors:

Most of the new visitors to northern Tasmania we should consider are either from Asia or are a new wave of global experience seekers. The visitors from Asia are relatively short stay. There is a changing demographic happening with the Asian visitor; they are moving from planeloads to families, and a very important shift is taking place in the north. Families, couples between numbers of two to maybe 12, are increasingly becoming the face of tourism from an Asian background, and the face of tourism from the rest of the world are the experience seekers - cashed-up couples from anywhere or young couples from anywhere who want to come and experience. There is not a single visitor to Bridestowe Estate from Asia who has any interest whatsoever in riding a bike. I promise you that in the countries they come from, it is not the done thing. The 63-odd kilometres of rail line would have absolutely no attraction to short-stay tourists because it takes time to ride it. It might take two days, it might take three days - they have four hours, and what are they going to do with that four hours?

And

¹⁵ Written submission 33, Leaning Church Vineyard, p.1

¹⁶ Hansard transcript, Malcolm Reed, 5 Feb 2019, p.41-42

The population likely to use the trail, if it is for bikes, is unknown to Bridestowe Estate. We do not know of any significant group of visitors to northern Tasmania with a singular interest in using a bike trail.¹⁷

- 1.15 In his written submission, Stephen Zvillis also expressed doubts about the commercial viability of a rail trail:

Unlike heritage rail, which through fares and sales of merchandise collect revenue to sustain the ongoing operation, no provision has been made to collect fees or tolls from riders to finance the trails upkeep. Thus, all expenditure will have to be sourced from local ratepayers or taxpayers. The Federal Government grant is far short of fully financing the creation of the trail, so ratepayers will be financing the balance of the establishment costs in the first instance and on an ongoing basis to maintain the trail. Propositions to liquidate the railway track assets through scrap sale are unfeasible, as the train remains the property of TasRail, who would determine the means of disposal (or re-use) of the track and claim any revenue generated by disposal – so as a source of revenue for the trail establishment, that is not an option. Unlike the heritage rail proposal, there is unlikely to be a large voluntary community contribution of cash, labour and equipment, for establishing the rail trail, which can off-set government sourced funding.¹⁸

- 1.16 John Orchard made the following suggestion:

That a moratorium be put on the North-East line until it is seen whether the Heritage train will be a success or not, as the rails could never be replaced.¹⁹

- 1.17 The Tourism Northern Tasmania submission pointed out:

The feasibility of the recreational trail in generating an economic return has been well documented in 'North East Rail Trail Preliminary Demand and Economic Benefit Assessment', (February 2014) and 'Investing in our Tourism Future' report, May 2016. In summary these reports state that once fully operational, after 5 years 22,800 visitors would be expected to use the trail, generating \$3.5million and sustaining 40 full time equivalent jobs.²⁰

Optimal length of rail trails

- 1.18 The Inquiry received evidence that rail trails are ideally a multi-day experience in order to maximise economic benefit to a region.

- 1.19 During hearings, Greg Howard, Mayor of Dorset Council, advised:

From our point of view and looking at rail trails around Australia, we are looking at the ideal distance being 100 kilometres. That usually amounts to a

¹⁷ Hansard transcript, Robert Ravens, 5 Feb 2019, p.21

¹⁸ Written submission 12, Stephen Zvillis, p.3

¹⁹ Written submission 11, John Orchard, p.1

²⁰ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.4

*three- or four-day ride depending on the group and usually a four-night stay and sometimes five.*²¹

1.20 The Dorset Council submission noted:

*The existing rail trail from Scottsdale to the Billycock is 28km in length and creates minimal economic benefit as it is lacking in critical mass. However, combined with the Lilydale to Scottsdale leg there would be a total of approximately 70km of trail making it a very attractive product offering.*²²

Social and health benefits

1.21 A number of witnesses pointed out the social and health benefits of having accessible trails throughout Tasmania.

1.22 In their written submission, Dianne and Peter Morgan provided the following information:

Recently, on a road trip on mainland Australia travelling through Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales we were amazed at the number of small country towns where disused railway lines had been converted to rail trails. This was much to our delight as it enabled us to enjoy running and walking in the environs of the town – away from roads and highways. We were pleased because this made it easy for us to remain physically active during our trip as well as enhancing our experience of towns with their nearby countryside. We were also impressed with the number of other people making use of the trails.

*As residents of Lilydale we would very much enjoy access to the disused North-East Railway Line. At present, our walking, cycling and running is restricted to local roads which are narrow and not conducive to safe pedestrian and cycling activity.*²³

1.23 The written submission from Tourism Northern Tasmania made the following point:

Community use of a recreational trail. This has perhaps been undersold to date, only because social and health returns are generally considered 'indirect' benefits for infrastructure investments of this kind. Evidence from country Victoria and New Zealand prove that not only do community members use these trails for daily exercise or to participate in community events, but this use improves social engagement and health outcomes for those participating. In appreciating that the track record for regional Tasmania communities on most health measures is poor, the need for such recreational trails and facilities is obvious. Ensuring this essential infrastructure is accessible is critical. A

²¹ Hansard transcript, Greg Howard, 6 Feb 2019, p.28

²² Written submission 40, Dorset Council, p.2

²³ Written submission 8, Dianne and Peter Morgan, p.1

*recreational trail with an origin and destination of Scottsdale and Lilydale ensures that access.*²⁴

- 1.24 Central Otago Council Digital and Social Media Marketing Specialist Anthony Longman informed the Inquiry of the use of rail trails in New Zealand by the local community:

*.... the biggest user groups for the rail trail and the gorge is the local community. It is giving them a recreational asset; many in the community wouldn't jump on a train three times a week and go for a heritage rail travel, but you might go for a walk with your family. That is directly improving the quality of life of people in those communities. Also, it gives the wider surrounding area another asset that costs them nothing to use. It is an indirect benefit, but probably one of biggest benefits lifestyle-wise for a small town.*²⁵

User safety

- 1.25 North East Residents and Farmers Inc. (NERAF) raised a number of safety concerns:

*...there are two serious issues that have not been adequately addressed in the NTD initial proposal of February 2014 or in the Dorset Council's submission to the National Stronger Regions Fund dated 28 November 2014. Firstly, the railway is not fully covered with mobile phone reception. Whilst Telstra phones are mostly covered along the route, travellers from the mainland and those using Vodafone will not enjoy that coverage. Along with this is a completely inadequate appreciation of the need for safety fencing. Most of the railway line is cut into the sides of hills and some of the drops will exceed 40 metres where insufficient width allows for adequate batter. Mayor Howard has stated that there is no need for the trail to be compliant with Austroads minimum requirements. There is a high risk of injury if safety fencing is not provided and to complicate that there may well be no ability to report any incident.*²⁶

- 1.26 NERAF Chair Stuart Bryce made the following point regarding mobile phone coverage:

*The other issue is mobile phone coverage. If you have an accident on some of the remote parts of that trail, there is no mobile phone coverage at all, so somebody has to walk out. There would be places where it would even be extremely difficult for a helicopter to take an injured person out of that railway line.*²⁷

²⁴ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p 4-5.

²⁵ Hansard transcript, Anthony Longman, 10 May 2019, p.13-14

²⁶ Written submission 10, NERAF, p.4

²⁷ Hansard transcript, Stuart Bryce, 6 Feb p.3

1.27 When asked about safety concerns, Mr Burns made the following point:

*Are we going to ban bushwalking? There is a risk in every activity you do. If you took that approach, you would ban the Overland Track because that is quite remote as well. We have to get a chopper to get people out of there.*²⁸

1.28 Mr Burns also pointed out the safety benefits of providing cycle access away from Tasmanian roads:

....We want Tasmania to be a safe place to ride.

*Unfortunately, traffic is becoming an issue, especially in the south and more so in the north, so I am probably one of those fearless ones who gets out in the bunches and is not too worried about the cars, but it is a bit of a bell curve. They have done studies on cycling and I am probably in that third standard deviation away, in that 2.5 per cent who will ride on the road and not worry about it. The next 13 per cent are people who would love to ride, but do not really want to be in a high traffic environment so they like the bike lanes. They will stick to them; they will only go in areas where there are bike lanes or shared paths, that sort of thing. A third of the population, that other standard deviation 34 per cent, would love to ride a bike, but they don't want to go anywhere near cars and are looking for areas where they can ride and can take their families riding where there is no risk with traffic. That is where a rail trail just ticks all the boxes.*²⁹

Impact on adjacent landholders

1.29 A number of witnesses drew the attention of the Committee to the negative impacts on adjacent landholders due to the provision of public access to the North East Rail Corridor.

1.30 NERAF's written submission stated:

*A significant concern of NERAF is that of security of property, although privacy and biosecurity are also issues. From what we understand, neither Police nor emergency vehicles will be able to access the trail and that Police motorbikes cease operations at 10:00 pm and in the wet. Therefore, it appears that miscreants will have access to that trail with little chance of being denied that access or apprehended. Accordingly, concerns regarding property are indeed real. NERAF members have reported access to the rail line by dirt bikes etc at Rocherlea and also further down the line and have reported that fences have been cut and access gained to adjoining properties. This will only get worse with the removal of the rails.*³⁰

²⁸ Hansard transcript, Collin Burns, 5 Feb 2019, p.38

²⁹ Hansard transcript, Collin Burns, 5 Feb 2019, p.31

³⁰ Written submission 10, NERAF, p.3

1.31 NERAF also expressed concerns regarding biosecurity:

This is an important issue for all farmers along the corridor, particularly as the origin and cleanliness of bicycles and associated gear will not be monitored. Of particular note is that of Phylloxera (Daktulosphaira vitifoliae (Fitch)), a grape vine pest that has already infected a number of vineyard areas on the mainland and can only be eradicated by replacing vines. Phylloxera has an airborne phase and is known to travel considerable distances to infect the roots of vines that have not been planted on phylloxera resistant root stock. Almost all vines planted on or before 2000 in Tasmania are on their natural roots and therefore vulnerable.

There are many more weed and crop problems that will need to be addressed should a further corridor be opened to the travelling public and this includes animal (dog) droppings some of which are capable of aborting pregnancy in cows, and poa aquatica grass can be fatal to cattle if consumed. The fences on adjoining farms are mostly the standard seven wire and therefore can easily be breached by dogs. Unfortunately, legislation advanced to put the onus on the corridor manager for secure fencing was defeated in the LC in September 2016.³¹

The third point is bushfires. There is no bushfire plan at all. We know that everywhere else there is. The trains have a bushfire plan. They have vehicles that can carry water to an area where there is a bushfire. The likelihood of trains causing a bushfire is very remote. The likelihood of cyclists having a little campfire on the side of the track is highly possible. These are things you must take into account for the safety of our own people. Not only that, but the safety of stock - we're talking about horses and dogs. If only a seven-wire fence goes along the side of the railway for farmers, dogs can go through that very quickly. Town dogs who have never been out in the country before we weren't arguing about people, about stock coming onto the railway line, we were arguing about dogs going into stock. Some dog faeces can abort pregnant cows. So there are some serious issues involved there and I want those to be taken into account.³²

1.32 Harness racing trainer Kent Rattray advised the following concern:

My concern comes back to the occupational health and safety - OH&S - of the track, because it is not a standard track on a flat surface. It runs and falls in areas. One area has over a 150-metre stretch; it drops 20 metres down onto what I call the railway straight.

If the bike track goes ahead, there is the randomness of somebody being there with me not knowing they are there - coming around the corner when I am hobbling at speed with a horse in the cart. I run a little bit the same problem as the rail trail does. I have steeper edges - if my horse shies and I go over the

³¹ Written submission 10, NERAF, p.3-4

³² Hansard transcript, Stuart Bryce, 6 Feb 2019, p.3

*edge, one of us is going to come to grief, maybe both of us. It will be a real OH&S issue when running my business. I have contemplated selling up and moving on if they go ahead.*³³

- 1.33 Mr Howard made the following statement in relation to information received from a cycling conference discussing the issue of the impact of rail trails upon adjacent landholders in Victoria:

First, when it was first proposed they were very strongly against it. They had all the same concerns that local farmers and residents have had here. The promising thing was that none of them have ever happened and they haven't happened anywhere in the world. While I can understand why people might think that, they just don't happen because the demographic that rides the rail trail are not antisocial people. You don't have issues with them.

*Second, some of the landowners who were very much against the rail trail in the very beginning actually set up their own businesses. Now you have farmers who are selling fruit and vegetables, wine and honey and whatever. It's a bit like anywhere where you go on a holiday, you don't necessarily carry everything that you buy; in fact, on a bike you carry as little as possible. Things like wine you just order and it is probably delivered to your home before you even get home, so that is a real bonus. That does happen along rail trails. There is probably a bit of a gap in the product once you get past Lebrina anyway. There are a couple of wineries at Lebrina and there is a shop there, but between there and Scottsdale at the moment, there would be a lack of product. We imagine that some of those areas would fill up reasonably quickly.*³⁴

- 1.34 Mike and Kathryn Scott noted in their written submission that community attitudes towards rail trails in other jurisdictions had changed after trails had opened:

*Talking to the proprietors of many of these businesses it is clear that they see the rail trails as a boon and in many cases the mainstay of their business. It is interesting to note that these people said that these trails experienced a lot of opposition and angst from sections of the local communities and landowners at the stage the North East Recreation Trail proposal now finds itself. That opposition and the fears that fomented it rapidly dissipated after the opening of the trails.*³⁵

- 1.35 The Government submission's attached Assessment by the Department of Treasury and Finance noted:

It is reported that some landowners adjacent to the corridor do not support the rail trail proposal. For much of the rail corridor, there is no fencing separating the corridor from adjacent farm land. The concerns of landowners appear to

³³ Hansard transcript, Kent Rattray, 6 Feb 2019, p.6

³⁴ Hansard transcript, Greg Howard, 6 Feb 2019, p.29

³⁵ Written submission 27, Mike and Kathryn Scott, p.2

be riders and walkers entering their land and potential damage to crops or disturbance to livestock, threats to biosecurity, fire and the loss of privacy. There are also concerns that the trail would be used by motorised transport, particularly motorbikes.

Treasury has been unable to find evidence that significant adverse outcomes have occurred on existing rail trails. The New Zealand study... did not identify any economic or social costs to local landowners, including any losses to farmers, from the rail trails.³⁶

Public liability insurance, rail trail

- 1.36 Dorset Council advised that public liability insurance for the rail trail would be the responsibility of Dorset Council, including any sections located within the Launceston municipality:

I can confirm that if Dorset Council is declared the Corridor Manager of a section of the Rail Corridor that Council would be responsible for any public liability claims and this risk would be covered by Council's blanket public liability insurance.

By way of background, Councils across the State often manage recreational facilities and public access open spaces on land that is managed by State Government agencies (Land Managers). Where this occurs the Land Manager will put in place legal instruments such as leases or licenses whereby the respective Council is responsible for the maintenance obligations and provides an indemnity to the Land Manager for any future claims. Council's public liability insurance will generally automatically cover these situations and Councils will ensure that use of such lands is specifically listed with its public liability insurer.³⁷

³⁶ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment B, 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposal', Department of Treasury and Finance, p.9

³⁷ Written correspondence, Dorset Council DOC/19/7825, 22 July 2019, p.1

TOR 2: THE FEASIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED LILYDALE-TURNERS MARSH TOURISM RAILWAY

Opportunities for the North East region

2.1 In its written submission, L&NER provided the following potential benefits of a heritage railway:

A list of possibilities

- *Marketing Tasmania as 'The Heritage Rail Isle'*
- *Boat trains that connect with cruise ships for inland excursions or overland trips, to pick up the boat at another port*
- *Integrated rail & bicycle touring, with roadside signage, phone apps and printed maps highlighting rail interchange and sights to see*
- *Mass tourists kept contained, leaving little or no impact on the environment and removing inexperienced drivers from the roads*
- *Rail & Dine experiences, functions catering and wine tasting trains*
- *Market trains that would bring the masses to regional festivals and market events. Knowing when how many patrons will arrive would enable third party providers to plan ahead and be prepared to have sufficient stock and staff available*
- *Picnic trains would revive the tradition of family outings to Dennison Gorge and Lilydale Falls.³⁸*

2.2 L&NER Community Liaison Officer Wendy McLennan also stated:

In the first year of operations, the rail car is projected to carry over 11 000 passengers. This equates to bed nights in Launceston, as well as meals and a flow-on effect to the economy. By year 5, direct expenditure at the railway could be \$1.52 million and this would create a direct economic impact of \$9.8 million.³⁹

And

As the Yarra Valley Railway has demonstrated, a railway is much more than trains and tracks. It brings together the community and has the potential to generate opportunities for disadvantaged youth and the unemployed to gain skills and work experience, leading to gainful, fulfilling employment. Discussions to this effect have already taken place with TAFE and the University of Tasmania.⁴⁰

³⁸ Written submission 41, L&NER, p.12-13

³⁹ Hansard transcript, Wendy McLennan, 5 February 2019, p.2

⁴⁰ Written submission 41, L&NER, p.13

2.3 L&NER advised that its proposal was funded by private donations and investors with approximately \$2.5 million in pledges and \$125k already spent purchasing, transporting and restoring a rail car.⁴¹

2.4 The Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia Inc. (ATHRA) projected that a tourist railway would carry a potential 25,000–30,000 passengers per year.⁴²

2.5 Chris Martin, representing L&NER, stated:

Rail tourism is growing in popularity across Australia, particularly in Victoria. There are over 70 tourist and heritage railways across Australia. I believe Tasmania has a wonderful opportunity, not just with the North East Railway but also looking at a strategic view of how we develop tourist and heritage rail across this state linking in with all other operations - Derwent Valley, the Don Railway, Transport Museum, Bridgewater to Hobart, and preserving the Bridgewater Bridge as a rail bridge so in the future trains can still go to our capital city.⁴³

2.6 The written submission of Gil Baxter stated:

There is a unique and wonderful opportunity to enhance tourism in Tasmania by restoring the existing rail line from Launceston to Scottsdale and using it as a tourist line. The popularity of the Strahan tourist train and other tourist lines such as Puffing Billy show that tourist trains can be successful and stimulate the local economy.

The tourist industry relies typically on affluent members of society. Older people and retirees constitute a large section of this group. Train travel can be enjoyed by people of all ages and physical abilities. Bike riding, on the other hand, is difficult and not that many older people participate in this activity.⁴⁴

2.7 Wayne Venn's written submission noted the potential for integrated visitor experiences:

There is the opportunity for there to be a flow on to other recreational activities like the Bike Trail from Scottsdale and can be complementary to each other in providing combined activities, ie the train to Scottsdale, the Bike and Fun Run on the trail and overnight in Scottsdale and return to Launceston the next day. To complement events, a train could be incorporated as part of the experience, ie during the Lavender Season of course Nabowla would be the focus, trips to wineries could be an event with co-ordination with local bus operators.

⁴¹ Written submission, L&NER, p.11

⁴² Tabled document, Association of Tourist and Heritage Railways Aust Inc. 17 Apr 2019 p.4

⁴³ Hansard transcript, Chris Martin, 5 February 2019, p.3

⁴⁴ Written submission 2, Gil Baxter, p.1

Trains are by their very nature are restricted to a rail corridor, whereas other recreational pursuits such as bike and horse riding, trail bikes and walking are not restricted by specific requirements like a railway track.⁴⁵

2.8 However, the Government in its written submission noted:

An assessment of the benefits, costs and risks is not straightforward due to the inevitable degree of uncertainty with projects of this nature. L&NER has not prepared a full business case for the proposal and, in particular, has not estimated the capital costs of refurbishment of the entire line. Due to the greater scale and complexity of the L&NER proposal, a more detailed assessment is required than for the rail trail proposal.⁴⁶

Cost of development

2.9 The Inquiry received a range of figures as to the costs of repairing the line.

2.10 LNER provided an estimated costing for Stage 1 of its proposed heritage railway:

Costs involved with the train option.

In calculating the total capital costs for Stage 1 from Lilydale to Wyena a contingency of 20% has been allowed for. Total cost to upgrade the track is \$110,388. (p28 Ontrack report)

Track Infrastructure \$17,990.

Tasrail have indicated that they have sleepers stockpiled for use by L&NER. The only cost involved would be freight which has been pledged.

Level Crossing Infrastructure \$69,500

Civil Bridge Works \$4,500

Mechanical Infrastructure – equipment. zero

- *The rail car has been purchased by a private investor who has also paid for its transport from the Don River Railway and all refurbishment costs.*
- *There is no paid labour for the track work as it is being done by experienced track repairers who worked on the line for TasRail.*
- *The accreditation will be sought once the management of the corridor is determined.⁴⁷*

2.11 Tourism Northern Tasmania noted in its written submission:

One of the largest unknowns is not that the rail corridor infrastructure upgrades will be very expensive, but rather the capacity for the Launceston and North East Railway (L&NER) group to underwrite this cost without public sector funding. This is a claim that the group has repeatedly made, but may not

⁴⁵ Written submission 61, Wayne Venn, p.3

⁴⁶ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment B, 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposal', Department of Treasury and Finance, p.12

⁴⁷ Written submission, L&NER, Attachment 15, p.4-5

have considered the realities of operating a heritage railway on a disused rail corridor.

And

This is unfortunately an unavoidable reality of railway operations. For the L&NER group to operate on the North East Rail Corridor to a contemporary safety standard prescribed by the National Rail Safety Authority, public sector funding would need to be secured in the range of multi-millions of dollars to ensure the infrastructure alone was up to acceptable standards.⁴⁸

2.12 The written submission of Rail Trails Australia noted:

The Yarra Valley Railway, to the east of Melbourne, has been working on restoring the 13km Healesville to Yarra Glen line for over 10 years. A rail car has provided services for several years on a 4km section. Despite hundreds of active volunteers and approximately \$8m in funding, completion date is still unconfirmed but suggested to be beyond 2020.⁴⁹

2.13 The Government submission noted:

In its report to Infrastructure Tasmania, Raylink Consulting estimated the following rehabilitation costs, assuming zero cost for rails and sleepers. These estimates do not include the section from Coldwater Creek to Turners Marsh. Raylink Consulting 2017 estimates of rehabilitation works Stage of line Cost (\$) Turners Marsh to Lilydale Falls 5 560 314 Lilydale Falls to Wyena 3 974 968 Wyena to Scottsdale 6 334 427. Total 15 869 709. L&NER has also engaged BobV Rail to examine the condition of the line and estimate the rehabilitation costs. The only cost estimate available is for the line from Lilydale to Wyena, which is \$110 388 and includes a contingency of 20 per cent. This includes a cost estimate of \$17 990 for track infrastructure .

The very significant difference between Raylink and BobV Rail for the Lilydale to Wyena section is partly due to Raylink using commercial rates for labour, as Raylink was not able to assess how much labour would be available from volunteers or under the Work for the Dole employment program. (p13)

A major issue is the cost of re-establishing crossings. Raylink has costed the active protection requirements of each of the 15 crossings at \$350 000 apiece, while L&NER considers that it could complete the works for \$13 000 apiece using technology deployed elsewhere in the tourist railway industry.

As another example, Raylink has estimated that \$192 000 is needed to rectify the tunnel drainage system. The L&NER considers that the tunnel is fit for purpose and that work is only required in the medium to long term, and that it could be included in a future Work for the Dole employment program.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.6-7

⁴⁹ Written submission 46, Rail Trails Australia Inc. p.2

⁵⁰ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment B, 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposal', Department of Treasury and Finance, p.12

ONRSR site visit and report

- 2.14 In order to assist it to make an informed decision, ONRSR agreed to a request by the Committee to accompany it on an inspection of the North East Rail Corridor. The ONRSR staff involved had specialist expertise in structures, track and civil infrastructure, railway operations and rail safety and included two engineers, a rail safety officer and a technical officer.
- 2.15 The Committee travelled on the North East Rail Corridor between Turners Marsh and Wyena on 13 June 2019. ONRSR subsequently submitted a report based on observations made over 20.1km of the North East line between Turners Marsh to Wyena. Additional information regarding the cost of repairs is contained in the Report of the National Rail Safety Regulator in Appendix 2.

Volunteers

- 2.16 L&NER advised that its proposed heritage railway would largely be operated and maintained by volunteers and that it had many suitably qualified volunteers willing to work on the project. Ms McLennan stated:

The fact the main part of the infrastructure of the railway is still intact means it can be reopened using minimal capital available through volunteers. This will bring significant economic benefit to the region, as well as being a catalyst for sustainable economic generation in the area. The economic benefit will be far greater as the years progress - larger trains will generate an income of \$8 000 per day and be operated by volunteers, with outgoings only for diesel.⁵¹

- 2.17 Peter Clements, Principal Rail Safety Officer, Office of the Rail Regulator made the following observation:

The point I would add is that volunteers have a burst of enthusiasm and a lot of people get involved. When there is a realisation there is a lot of hard, physical, often manual labour involved, that enthusiasm tends to wane. The organisation has to look at bringing in contractors, for example, or other paid people to come and do the work that is necessary to maintain large amounts of infrastructure. What I see are the guys who have small, manageable pieces of infrastructure and they are okay with that amount. The minute they try to take on too much is where they get into strife.

And

I will give you a couple of examples in Tasmania, if you like. The Transport Museum at Glenorchy only has about 400 metres of track. You have the Sheffield, Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage Society has 1 kilometre. The Wee Georgie Wood around Tullah has 1 kilometre. They are the length of

⁵¹ Hansard transcript, Wendy McLennan, 5 Feb 2019, p.2

*infrastructure that seems to be manageable. Anything beyond that tends to deteriorate.*⁵²

And

Ms RATTRAY - *Do you think that is because people may be deterred to visit a railway feature with only 1 kilometre of track?*

Mr CLEMENTS - *The reason is that a lot of infrastructure requires a lot of work. If you have 1 or 2 kilometres of track - the Don River Railway, for example, has 3 kilometres of track and they handle that quite nicely - that is manageable within the resources or for the competence or capacity of the organisation to handle. Beyond that, the competence and capacity to undertake maintenance of roads and massive infrastructure becomes less viable.*

*Given the much smaller pool of potential volunteers in the north-east region and the examples highlighted above, it would appear that restoring the 21km of railway from Coldwater Creek Junction to Lilydale will be a great challenge and take considerable time. It is unlikely that reconstruction of another 42km from Lilydale to Scottsdale would be feasible in any reasonable time period.*⁵³

2.18 In his written submission, Dr George Hyde suggested the following:

*Should the inquiry support the railway development for part or all of the North-East Corridor, I would recommend a timeframe contingency be placed on such railway development proposal, in that the railway development must be fully operational within a certain time frame (I would suggest 2 years would be adequate).*⁵⁴

Safety

2.19 Tourism Northern Tasmania noted in its written submission:

*Paramount to the feasibility of any passenger transport business is safety. The safe operations of railway for not only the passengers and staff, but all other users of adjoining land, roads and thoroughfares. What is required to run a safe railway, in terms of resourcing, expertise, capital and infrastructure investment is at the determination of the National Rail Safety Authority.*⁵⁵

2.20 Sue McCarrey, National Rail Safety Regulator, provided the following advice:

I would love to see every railway line in Australia open and being used, but my word of warning would be not to underestimate the cost involved. As soon as

⁵² Hansard transcript, Peter Clements, 16 Apr 2019, p.14

⁵³ Written submission 46, Rail Trails Australia Inc. p.2

⁵⁴ Written submission 7, George Hyde, p.1

⁵⁵ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.2

you have bridges on a rail system - this has level crossings that need to have equipment replaced and not simply be upgraded because they were removed - I would love to see it operating, but do not underestimate the cost. When you are looking at proposals or cost proposals, please make sure the proposal has been looked at and written by a senior engineer with the appropriate qualifications to be doing so.⁵⁶

Level crossings

2.21 The written submission from Tourism Northern Tasmania noted:

Between Lilydale and Turners Marsh there are four points where the railway crosses the C822 and C823 roads. If the estimates by Raylink stated in the report are taken as an upper level of investment, \$1.2 million would be required to improve all four level crossings to an appropriate standard. Even if a lower range cost per level crossing of half this value was accepted by State Roads and/or appropriate authority, a cost of \$600,000 is more than likely beyond the capacity of the L&NER group to underwrite.⁵⁷

2.22 The Department of Treasury and Finance Assessment contained in the Government's written submission noted:

A major issue is the cost of re-establishing crossings. Raylink has costed the active protection requirements of each of the 15 crossings at \$350 000 apiece, while L&NER considers that it could complete the works for \$13 000 apiece using technology deployed elsewhere in the tourist railway industry.⁵⁸

2.23 Mr Howard provided the following information:

Level crossing requirements - it is a bit hard to tell off the map whether there are 42 or 43 level crossings or road crossings along the line between Coldwater Creek and Scottsdale. Some of that may vary from high-speed crossings, 80- to 100-kilometre zones on the Golconda Road and on all the gravel roads. Some of them are short roads that go into a single property or a farm.

Each and every one of those road crossings has to be risk assessed, and they have to come up with a suitable warning system now the standard system is bells and whistles. There were about a dozen crossings that had bells and whistles when it was a freight train. I imagine they would need to be increased.

One of the things that happens with rail crossings is an agreement between the rail regulator, the rail operator and the road authority. The road authorities in this case are the Dorset Council and the Launceston City Council. They are the road authorities. While generally the road corridor is 20 metres in width, when it comes to a road, it actually shrinks to a metre and a little bit either side

⁵⁶ Hansard transcript, Sue McCarrey, 16 Apr 2019, p.14

⁵⁷ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.6

⁵⁸ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment B, 'Assessment of the Launceston and North-East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposal', Department of Treasury and Finance, p.12

of the tracks because that is part of the road corridor. Therefore, the road authority has significant input into what happens within that road corridor.

Therefore, the road authority is also responsible for anything that happens outside that metre-and-a-half inside the road corridor. One of the things the heritage train people have said is that there would be no need for any public funds to go towards the rehabilitation of the line and the commencement of the rail service. However, the road authority is responsible for all road markings, all signage outside the actual sets of lights, vegetation, clearance and maintenance, and any earthworks that may be required to maintain reasonable site lines. Remember that the standards have changed significantly on those things since 2003 and back to 1997-98, whenever it was when the freight trains travelled on a regular basis.

Our estimation - and it is only an estimation because we haven't studied the new standards in detail - is we would be spending hundreds of thousands of dollars as a road authority to upgrade the approaches to level crossings.⁵⁹

2.24 However, ATHRA disputed the estimated cost of level crossings:

Level crossing costs are also grossly exaggerated. TasRail could re-install the level crossing lights or alternative technologies can be promoted for significantly reduced costs.⁶⁰

2.25 Additional details regarding level crossings can be found in the Report from ONRSR in Appendix 2.

Visitor experience

Extension of heritage railway beyond Lilydale

2.26 L&NER proposes that the entire North East Rail Corridor be utilised for a tourist heritage railway and that this be done in four stages:

Stage 1: Karoola to Lilydale Falls

Stage 2: Karoola to Turners Marsh and Coldwater Creek

Stage 3: Wyena – Lebrina Vineyards and Denison Gorge

Stage 4: Through to Scottsdale.

2.27 Ms McLennan provided the following comments:

The reason we have been talking about taking the railway through to Scottsdale is because Scottsdale needs some development. It needs to have an attraction. Scottsdale has nothing. Scottsdale is a passing-through town on the way to the Blue Derby or Bridport. As far as a destination, it does not have a thing.

⁵⁹ Hansard transcript, 6 Feb 2019, Greg Howard, p.32

⁶⁰ Written submission 44, Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Aus Inc, p.3

It has a beautiful railway station that has been allowed to become absolutely vandalised and it is derelict. We see ourselves as being able to do that railway station up and set up a museum and a heritage rail museum there. If you retained the railway, you could run small self-propelled railcars out of Scottsdale as far as Nabowla. That would create a secondary attraction to what we would be running with the train.⁶¹

- 2.28 A number of other witnesses proposed to extend a heritage rail operation to Wyena in order to include the attractions of the tunnel at Tunnel and the Denison Gorge.

- 2.29 The written submission of Craig Webb expressed the following view:

I have worked on the North-East line over the years and the section between Coldwater and Wyena at least needs to be kept not only for the train ride but the three main attractions Lilydale Falls, the Tunnel and Denison Gorge. They would be great attractions for the whole train experience, and without them it would not be worth the effort of getting this train back up and running.⁶²

- 2.30 The written submission of Ross Harris noted the potential attraction of tunnels to railway journeys:

For the Launceston and North East Railway's first stage proposal to be successful, it must incorporate the tunnel. There are only three other heritage rail experiences in Australia that feature a tunnel. These are located at Lithgow in New South Wales, the Kuranda line near Cairns in Queensland, and the Yarra Valley Railway at Healesville. Railway tunnels bring great pleasure and excitement – particularly to children, who are reminded about such fantasies as the 'Harry Potter Express'. Adults recall stories featuring tunnels such as 'Murder on the Orient Express'. A tunnel can be an additional motivation for the visitor to ride on the train. It can generate more interest than a train travelling over high bridges, and tunnels have a greater romantic appeal.⁶³

- 2.31 Tourism Northern Tasmania's written submission did not share this view:

The reality of the train passenger experience is when you go through a tunnel, it gets dark. For the passenger the tunnel isn't a highly attractive feature. In fact a railway tunnel experienced on foot or by bicycle is a far more meaningful experience, with many more opportunities to expand on the interpretation of the structure and its history than would be available on-board a train.

Denison Gorge... has scenic value there is no doubt. But it is not of such a high impactful nature as to become a top selling point for the railway. Again, by walking, cycling or riding through the Gorge its impact would be more meaningful.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Hansard transcript, Wendy McLennan, 5 February 2019, p.41

⁶² Written submission 31, Craig Webb, p.1

⁶³ Written submission 34, Ross Harris, p.3

⁶⁴ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.13

- 2.32 The Inquiry received several comments that longer tourist rail trips were not necessarily desirable. Mr Howard noted:

In our view, if the heritage train proposal were to work at all and be successful, a shorter trail is the way they would need to go. The reason for that is that heritage railways are horrendously expensive, not just to rehabilitate from the current state of this line, but to maintain. Operating costs are very significant, including insurance, which the proposal the heritage guys put forward has severely underestimated, along with many other of their maintenance costs. Treasury noted in its report that it had overstated its market and heavily understated its operational and maintenance costs.

While there might be some argument about this, in general, heritage rail services in Victoria generally run for less than 20 kilometres. I know Puffing Billy runs for 24 kilometres, but generally they are shorter than 20 kilometres. That is because most people are not rail enthusiasts. I know a percentage are rail enthusiasts - and I do not have anything against those people - but it is likely that someone on holidays is only going to ride on one heritage rail service and they probably only want to commit half a day to it, which is why those shorter trails tend to have better service. The longer the trail, the less likely you are to attract tourists because they certainly do not want to spend most of the day. In the heritage rail proposal to come all the way to Scottsdale that would be a full day trip and it would not allow for too many stops. The previous one that came from Launceston left at 7.30 and did not get home until 5.30 so it was 10-hour turnaround trip.⁶⁵

- 2.33 The written submission of Rail Trails Australia noted:

In Victoria, the longest tourist railway is the narrow gauge Puffing Billy at 24km. All others are less than 20km. The most popular sections of these railways are considerably closer to 10km rather than 20km⁶⁶

- 2.34 A number of witnesses and submissions made the point that, ideally, a tourist railway should have a departure and destination point that are population hubs and have facilities in order to be successful.

- 2.35 Mr Griffin expressed the following view:

The argument of origin and destination is in any tour. From my background in travel and tourism selling itineraries, and any form of transport is what I have been doing my entire adult life, origin and destination are the mechanics of why you travel.

In this context, the argument is that having an origin in Launceston, which is a population base connected to an airport, is the most viable thing we need to do. There are a huge number of obstacles. One obvious thing is that Launceston

⁶⁵ Hansard transcript, Greg Howard, 6 Feb 2019, p.30

⁶⁶ Written submission 46, Rail Trails Australia Inc. p.2

doesn't have a railway station, but the future aspiration for the railway is to originate from Launceston and, in my opinion, go as far as Lilydale.

Lilydale as a destination is one of those quintessential Tasmanian villages, nestled around wineries. It is an absolutely beautiful proposition as the end point of your rail experience. In the submission we talk about how, from Lilydale, you can then go on the recreational trail and walk it, ride it, or take a half-day coach tour around wineries. Bridestowe Lavender Farm is only 22 minutes up the street. For a tour concept, that's not even spitting distance.

The idea of origin and destination is around a population base to a point where there's a community of Tasmanians who you can engage with and where there are businesses that you can transact with. I understand there have been suggestions of a railway going as far as Wyena. You have no built industry in Wyena, no service industry, so where's the benefit going to come from in terms of an economic stimulus? Hence, the argument of Lilydale as your destination point is viable when looking at the mechanics of travel.⁶⁷

And

But the future potential for the railway is to evolve to be able to operate from Launceston. In this the railway can explore a broader range of services not only on the North East railway corridor but potentially to other destinations in Tasmania.

And

...this singular focus on Scottsdale distracts the L&NER group from focusing on its real future potential. That being to base its operations in Launceston city and operate on multiple corridors.⁶⁸

2.36 Brett Whelan, President of Yarra Valley Railway stated:

To be super-successful, to really be kicking goals, you need to be going from somewhere to somewhere else, not to nowhere.⁶⁹

2.37 Paul Cabalzar pointed out:

Coldwater Creek is just a junction of lines. There is no road to it, there is no footpath to it, there is nothing.⁷⁰

2.38 Anna Povey, in her written submission, made the following comment:

Even if a tourist is very keen, and makes sure to have time to do the train journey, they will not be free to visit all the local businesses that interest them. A train will stop once or twice only, at which point all the tourists will have to

⁶⁷ Hansard transcript, Chris Griffin, 17 April 2019, p.3

⁶⁸ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p. 8

⁶⁹ Hansard transcript, Brett Whelan, 16 Apr 2019, p.8

⁷⁰ Hansard transcript, Paul Cabalzar, 17 Apr 2019, p.36

get off together. Any businesses will have to be waiting for them there, with a bus to transport them and to return them to the train station before the train leaves. There will be very little choice for the tourist, and a lot of competition amongst businesses. More likely, only one or two businesses will be in a position to take advantage of the train passengers' custom. Between trains, there will be no tourists using the corridor at all, so "a long time between drinks" for a business.⁷¹

- 2.39 A similar sentiment was expressed by Mark and Sarah Hirst of Leaning Church Vineyard in their written submission:

We do not support one train per week travelling past our – and many other small businesses – that only stops at pre-determined businesses (which by coincidence happen to be owned by the heritage train supporters).

For the Lalla Road Art Gallery, the Rhododendron Gardens, Leaning Church Vineyard, Cherry Top Accommodation, Plover's Ridge Accommodation and the Pear Tree Accommodation – we all miss out as the train hurtles past to only stop at Providence Vineyard

Trains are not a solution to maximise spend and visitation in North East Tasmania.⁷²

Public liability insurance, heritage railway

- 2.40 The written submission of L&NER provided an estimated cost of \$25,000 for public liability insurance in its first year of operation.⁷³

- 2.41 However, Government submission's assessment of the two proposals prepared by the Department of Treasury and Finance advised that Infrastructure Tasmania had recently been involved in assisting a separate tourist railway that currently holds public liability insurance for the same coverage level that L&NER requires. It noted that:

Insurance broker Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT) has assessed the proposed operation and has recommended a coverage level that is ten times the level to which the L&NER quotation applies.⁷⁴

- 2.42 Yarra Valley Railway advised of the Victorian arrangement whereby tourist rail operators contributed to joint umbrella public liability insurance, with the Victorian Government funding the remainder. The insurance coverage was \$10 million dollars at a cost to Yarra Valley Railway of \$7,900 per annum.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Written submission 28, Anna Povey, p.2

⁷² Written submission 33, Leaning Church Vineyard, p.2

⁷³ Written submission 41, L&NER, p.13

⁷⁴ Written submission 62b, Government, Attachment B, p.15

⁷⁵ Written correspondence, Brett Whelan, 16 April 2019

2.43 The Treasurer stated:

One of the key things that has surprised me and Treasury has noted it, in terms of an actual business case and business plan, I don't think that one currently exists to the extent we would understand a business plan in terms of the rail option. One of my major concerns - and we spent some time in my office looking at this both then and recently - was about insurance. Treasury makes the point it thinks the suggestion that \$20 million-worth of insurance is insufficient and manifestly inadequate and the amount should be closer to \$200 million. If we look at the Abt Railway, a different terrain and a different style of operation, our insurance costs are between \$5 000 to \$6 000. The most recent advice I have to hand is that the type of cover required would be around \$200 000 per year to get the level of insurance required.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Hansard transcript, Treasurer, 30 May 2019, p.3

TOR 3: THE FEASIBILITY, FUNDING, FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF ANY TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS ON THE NORTH EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR

- 3.1 TasRail advised that, under current arrangements, it accepts that it is necessary for it to retain custodianship and responsibility for the non-operational lines that remain part of the Tasmanian rail network.⁷⁷

Management of the corridor under the Rail Trail proposal

- 3.2 Mr Howard advised that Dorset Council would seek to be appointed manager of the corridor and that maintenance of the corridor would be undertaken by the North East Recreational Trail Group:

*The maintenance, as I understand it, is going to be undertaken by the North East Recreational Trail Group. We will be the rail corridor, but we have an agreement with them to undertake the maintenance. The maintenance on rail trails is really very low.*⁷⁸

- 3.3 Mike Scott expressed his desire to see maintenance undertaken on the Corridor:

Why am I as a neighbour of the corridor looking to have the recreation trail put in place? Basically, it comes down to management first up. I, particularly in this last spring season, have spent untold days and a lot of money controlling weeds like gorse, blackberry and thistle, all of which come from the corridor. It is a transmission vector for all these kinds of weeds.

Beyond that it is also a nursery for browsers such as wallabies, possums and all those kinds of pests who like nothing better than to eat the grass I would rather have for my sheep. I have spent in the last couple of years \$20 000 on refencing that side of my property for that particular reason. In short, I am desperate to see that corridor come under responsible management.

And

*Volunteers, whether it be rail or trail, do not have that sort of experience and a good project like that will bring in that kind of support. With that linkage into Dorset Council I have the trust as a landowner that responsible management will take place.*⁷⁹

- 3.4 Richard Forrest, Treasurer, North East Rail Trail Inc. advised the following:

Once the rail trail is completed by Dorset Council, then NERT will take on the care, maintenance and management of the rail trail for the community. We have that agreement established.

⁷⁷ Written submission 36, TasRail, p.2

⁷⁸ Hansard transcript, Greg Howard, 6 Feb 2019, p.40

⁷⁹ Hansard transcript, Mike Scott, 6 Feb 2019, p.16-17

The expected cost of managing the rail trail, the Rotary Club of Scottsdale is the founder and the manager of the 28-kilometre rail trail from Scottsdale to Billycock Hill. Through our NERT board member Glenn Moore, and he is also the Scottsdale Rotary Club member, Glenn has passed over to us the actual costs that have been expended by Scottsdale Rotary in the maintenance of this rail trail. These figures I can put for you, but these figures show that it costs \$100.43 per kilometre, per year to manage their rail trail. I cannot tell you what it is going to cost to manage our rail trail because we don't know our distance yet. We do at least have the hard numbers over 12 months as a very firm guidance for going forward.

I also acknowledge that volunteer labour is part of this management maintenance outcome and this has to be factored into our management and maintenance budgets.⁸⁰

Management of the Corridor under the Heritage Railway proposal

- 3.5 L&NER advised that volunteers and residents would maintain the corridor under the heritage rail proposal:

***Ms RATTRAY** - Can I explore the maintenance issue around the bikes versus trains? Do the volunteer organisation and L&NER envisage this will all be undertaken by the volunteers.*

***Ms McLENNAN** - What actually happens is the person currently spraying the rail for TasRail, Kevin Brown, has offered to continue to look after the railway on our behalf and only charge us a certain component for what needs to be done.*

And

The farmers along the line have also said they are prepared to maintain the section of the line where it goes past their property. They would prefer to do this and help us out with the whole exercise if they all maintain their section of track; they are even willing to go in and fix up the Denison Gorge and all these other areas, to bring them back to what they were.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Hansard transcript, Richard Forrest, 20 May 2019, p.20-21

⁸¹ Hansard transcript, Wendy McLennan, 5 February 2019, p.13

TOR 4: ANY OTHER MATTERS INCIDENTAL THERETO

Potential future as a freight line

- 4.1 The Committee considered evidence relating to the feasibility of the North East Rail Corridor being used for freight purposes in the future.
- 4.2 In its written submission, TasRail advised:

The TasRail Board of Directors had previously determined that there was little prospect of a commercially viable freight task on the non-operational lines in the short to medium term, at least not of a scale to justify the significant investment required to recommission the rail infrastructure.

In addition to the likely cost to upgrade and/or renew the rail and sleepers on the non-operational lines including the North East Line, substantial investment would be required to renew the rail formation to ensure it is capable to support the integrity and safety of rail operations including the need for new and/or refurbished culverts and drainage.

It was also recognised that structures such as rail bridges would need considerable investment as well as the level crossings that would need to be appropriately risk assessed and contemporary controls installed so as to comply with current Australian Standards relevant for the conditions. Additional expenditure would also be required in order to clear and maintain vegetation, erect new rail safety signage within the corridor for train operations, as well as private crossings, stock crossings and fencing and public safety notices where appropriate.⁸²

- 4.3 The Treasurer was asked for his views in relation to this and advised:

Mr DEAN - *We were told once that the north-south line would never be used for log transport again. We were told that only a few years ago and now that line is being used to transport of timber logs north and south in some big way.*

Mr GUTWEIN - *Interestingly enough, you would be well be aware, if you look back at my last five or six budgets and budgets prior to that, that the below-rail expenditure has been substantial with a view to ensuring the line is appropriate for hauling large numbers of carriages. Without that level of investment, the north-east line will never stack up.*

And

My understanding in terms of transport economics is that to be efficient on rail, you need to pull larger numbers of carriages, and as you would well be aware that train line winds its way through the north-east. The reason we have had so many derailments over time in the Midlands is that when rail was first

⁸² Written submission 36, TasRail, p.1

introduced to Tasmania, it used to travel through the Midlands to the big farm gates and it zig-zagged through the Midlands.

To get the economy to scale out of running a train, you have to pull lots of carriages. What happens when you are trying to turn is that the torque on the line pulls the train off and therefore, in terms of the narrow gauge we have, and the way that line traverses through the north-east, it won't ever be an option to transport goods out of the north east again.⁸³

Loss of infrastructure and heritage

4.4 A number of witnesses expressed their opposition to losing a piece of Tasmania's historic rail infrastructure.

4.5 L&NER in its written submission stated:

The North East Railway is a unique State owned asset that represents over a century of hard work and history. It is the taxpayers who have created this vital, secure link to the outside world and to destroy it purely for the fad of the time would be a backwards step.⁸⁴

4.6 In his written submission, Mr Robert Dickinson noted:

I would like to point out the fact that this railway line is a unique piece of our history, once the track is gone it is gone, and will never come back. If we destroy this precious asset now, our children and grandchildren may well wonder "What were they thinking?"⁸⁵

4.7 The written submission from Tim Fischer stated the following:

Why would any tourism oriented state such as Tasmania turn its back on developing a brilliant Ffestiniog type railway heritage jewel. The L&NER will be a hallmark attraction in North East Tasmania that showcases the natural splendour of the region. It heralds the future for Tasmanian Tourism, as it represents a significant advance on the products available to tourists and is environmentally very "low impact".⁸⁶

4.8 In his written submission Philip Wayne made the following statement:

I also cannot comprehend the loss of all that infrastructure forever, without thought at all for our future generations. The opportunity gone forever to have another world class heritage rail, that can be enjoyed by all age groups, international rail enthusiasts, even the disabled. At a very reasonable cost. Yes

⁸³ Hansard transcript, Treasurer, 30 May 2019, p.12

⁸⁴ Written submission 41, L&NER, p.20

⁸⁵ Written submission 3, Robert Dickinson, p.1

⁸⁶ Written submission 48, Tim Fischer, p.1

it will be difficult (time and money) our Government spends a lot of time and money to attract a wide range of tourists including local. Subsidising many.

Where is the Launceston City Council in all this, very quiet. Most paying passengers will start their paying rail adventure in Launceston. L&NER will benefit Launceston greatly.⁸⁷

- 4.9 Tourism Northern Tasmania in its written submission did not share the view that the corridor held significant heritage value:

The reality is very little if any of the rail corridor's history is preserved (especially the built heritage). Compared to other heritage railways the history that is recorded isn't of a compelling enough nature to base a heritage railway experience on.⁸⁸

- 4.10 Prof. David Adams, Pro Vice Chancellor, Community Partnerships and Regional Development, University of Tasmania, commented:

The supply/demand equation versus the costs of setting up bike trails. It is a limited market and at some point, Tasmania, will reach those limits. They are all examples, where the conversation should always have been; if we keep trading each one off one at a time for particular alternative use value, do we lose something about Tasmania and its past and what its future could be? It is not about preserving every line or every piece of heritage, it is about a considered view of the future of what could be a quite significant industry.⁸⁹

- 4.11 Cr Kate Wilson of Dunedin City Council and Chair of the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust made the following recommendation:

.... you want to keep some rail infrastructure because you do want to have some of that. There are some fences where on one side is iron and the other side is sleepers, and it actually keeps reminding you that you are on the railway. You do want to talk to the heritage side.⁹⁰

- 4.12 Ms Murphy made a similar point:

There is no reason you cannot have both. There is no reason you cannot have a cycle trail that retains the rail heritage. You cannot put a train along it, but all that trail can speak to the heritage. You can even have the odd train sitting at a station, but you do not have to have it moving along a trail to have a railway heritage.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Written submission 37, Philip Wayne, p.1

⁸⁸ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.5

⁸⁹ Hansard transcript, David Adams, 17 April 2019, p.27-28

⁹⁰ Hansard transcript, Kate Wilson, 10 May 2019, p.3

⁹¹ Hansard transcript, Tania Murphy, 10 May 2019, p.4

Re-use of any rail infrastructure

4.13 Michael de Bomford's written submission stated:

Initially "Rail Trail" intent was to preserve rail corridor's (rail banking) for future use with the possibility the rail corridor used for infrastructure projects including returning back to railway usage. Most current rail trails have been created where the actual rail lines have long been removed, but in recent times with aggressive lobbying & obtaining extensive grant funding's are able to include removal rail infrastructure including rail, sleepers etc. Even though the rail infrastructure is still owned by the crown, the intended north east project has allowed for scrap recovery of the steel to contribute to removal of the rail, but with current scrap value does not cover costings and will fall far short of initial budget forecast.⁹²

Co-located rail trail and tourist railway

4.14 The Committee received evidence that a co-located rail trail and tourist railway on the North East Corridor was not feasible due to a number of factors including safety and cost.

4.15 The Government advised:

This would require widening the cuttings and embankments, a deviation around the tunnel for the rail trail and the need for separate bridges and cantilevers by the existing bridges. The cost of this option has been estimated by Raylink Consulting at approximately \$50 million and therefore the co-location option is assessed as unviable.⁹³

4.16 Mr Griffin raised the concept of linking rather than co-locating a rail trail and heritage railway. He reiterated the benefits of a Launceston to Lilydale railway link to a railway and the potential synergies between the two:

Mr GRIFFIN - *A rail trail and a railway can actually work in cohesion as long as there is good will, good intent and co-promotion; there are effective case studies for that to happen.*

Ms RATTRAY - *There would probably be a lot of people who would be pleased to hear that you believe that a rail line can coexist with a rail trail next to it. It has been suggested that the terrain on the north-east line doesn't really allow for that. I am not sure if you have had an opportunity to walk any part of it or have some understanding to share your thoughts there.*

⁹² Written submission 59, Michael de Bomford, p.2

⁹³ Written submission 62, Government, Attachment C, p.3

Mr GRIFFIN - Yes, I have. I will clarify that the 'dual use' we are proposing is Launceston to Lilydale as a railway, and Lilydale to Scottsdale as the rail trail - not dual use of the corridor.

Ms RATTRAY - Oh, I thought you meant they go side by side.

Mr GRIFFIN - No, not at all. In the submission I have made that quite clear. Essentially, from conversations, particularly over the last 12 months, surely we can keep the rail and put a corridor alongside. The cost per kilometre is so prohibitive that you wouldn't even entertain it. It sounds like a great idea, but when you get into the civil engineering, the logistics and the costs, you put a line through it very quickly. That is to clarify that.

The rail and ride concept of Launceston to Lilydale allows your rail experience to be in a concise time frame that is manageable; you are less exposed to the per-kilometre cost with a two or three-hour turnaround. You reach a rail head and the train has to do a number of things mechanically. You want your visitor to have a Tasmanian experience in the village of Lilydale. You have other provisional experiences around, whether it be hiring a bike, going on a half-day wine tour - whichever, and then you can go back to Launceston. You don't have any conundrums of - I am stuck in Lilydale, now what do I do, I don't have a rental car?

If you are a bike tourer, it means you can carry on up the corridor to Scottsdale and around Tasmania on a bike. There is not a great deal of people in our visitor mechanics who actually do, but it is a viable option for them.⁹⁴

Community consultation

4.17 The Committee noted the importance of community support to both the rail trail and heritage rail proposals.

4.18 L&NER expressed the view that community consultation had been inadequate:

The project did not arise from extensive community consultation resulting in a strategic community plan, nor from a White Paper. There was no more than minimal interaction with farmers and residents directly affected along the North East railway, despite claims to the contrary.

Instead, it was presented by Council to the Dorset community as a done deal. This has led to a strong public response and outright rejection. It is a project that a large section of the community do not want.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Hansard transcript, Chris Griffin, 17 Apr 2019, p.4-5

⁹⁵ Written submission 41, L&NER, p.16

4.19 Prof Adams made the following comments:

The starting point is to understand that that should be the conversation that Tasmania is having. It should be led by the leaders of Tasmania around this table as well as the leaders in the sector. I know that people like Chris Martin are starting to have this conversation. It needs to be very much a slow, bottom-up process, not 'we are going to fix anything'.

It is not a problem so much as a missed opportunity to reframe the way in which heritage and the link with Heritage Tasmania, the link with TasRail, there are a number of organisations that should be in the conversation now if we are to move in this direction.

And

The other comment I make there is that a former director of Northern Tasmania Development, indeed when the first report on the viability of bike trails was undertaken in 2006-07, made the observation that it really should be a regional councils' conversation which at this point in time would be the Northern Tasmania Development Corporation albeit Dorset is not a member of that at the moment. The ability for a grouping of people within councils i.e. NTDC or potentially a local government association of Tasmania to engage in this conversation, I think, would be essential.

What we've seen in this debate is that individual councils may, for various reasons, form particular views and not necessarily want to engage in broader conversations. But the regional bodies still sit there, unclear what their value proposition is for many Tasmanians. Here would be an example where there is an important conversation about future social economic viability and revitalisation of the region that at the moment is a debate but not a debate with a pathway to resolution.⁹⁶

4.20 Rod Peirce representing Clutha Gold Trust and Barrie Wills explained the process of consultation that had occurred in New Zealand:

Mr WILLS - *That is the key you have to be there straightaway.....That is the first thing I said when we started off - you actually have to talk to the landowners right from the word go, before council or anyone gets involved. We did that and we have not been 100 per cent successful. We still have two properties to get through but we are being patient. I know from other merino farmers are a bit leery about their sheep and one or two of those were the biggest opposition to the rail trail from the outset and have turned into some of our biggest supporters.*

Mr PEIRCE - *We worked on the community; it was developed all the time. One of the first things our working group, which then became a charity trust, did was employ a negotiator. That was at a very early stage and he was crucial to the whole thing.*

⁹⁶ Hansard transcript, David Adams, 17 Apr 2019, p.29

Mr WILLS - Even before that we actually had a memorandum of understanding written and signed by the farmers and landowners.

Ms ARMITAGE - So your council put all this together? Who put the working group together?

Mr WILLS - We were just a mixture - it started through council - it was done from there initially but then came along.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the council didn't form the working group; you formed the working group yourselves?

Mr WILLS - Yes. It was a whole mixture of people. We were on the community board, and there were others from outside and not even associated with council. That's how we started, and then it morphed into a charitable trust and then we started it up and now we actually got a company going, which is running our two trails between us and that company.⁹⁷

Tasmanian Government's compromise solution

4.21 A number of witnesses and submissions commented on the Government's proposed compromise solution.

4.22 Cycling Australia advised that it supported the Government's position:

Cycling Tasmania fully supports the Government's compromise position and move that it be accepted. Whilst while we retain the view that the Rail Trail would be maximised by initiating in Launceston, the Government's decision will allow this important project to progress. This will allow the communities to focus on their specific interests after a period that has created some conflict within the community.

We also submit that realistic time frames be imposed on both projects to create certainty for the community, our members, government and businesses.⁹⁸

4.23 Launceston City Council in its written submission stated:

Whilst the Council is generally supportive of a heritage rail project for the line, the current L&NER proposal does not categorically demonstrate that it should be favoured to the exclusion of the rail trail project. For instance, valid questions around the cost of rehabilitation of the line and public liability insurance create significant uncertainty around the robustness of the business case, which has been prepared as a basis for decision making in this matter.

⁹⁷ Hansard transcript, Rod Peirce and Barrie Wills, 10 May 2019, p.7

⁹⁸ Written submission 38, Cycling Australia, p.2

It is considered that the State Government has completed a competent and balanced assessment of the two projects and developed a course of action by which both proposals can be developed in a complementary manner. There are successful examples of tourism rail and rail trails operating in tandem around the world and an opportunity exists here for a similarly successful operation to be established here.

The Council agrees with the State Government conclusion that both projects have the capacity to generate economic and employment benefits, both directly and indirectly for the Northern Region. This said, however, it is noted that the rail trail project currently concludes at Lilydale Falls and it is considered essential for the successful operation of the project that the trail be extended to the Lilydale Township and it is recommended that further funding be sought from the State Government for this to occur as part of this project. Further, the Council believes that a successful heritage rail operation should run through to Wyena to provide maximum scenic value and appeal and to provide linkages to nearby tourism attractions. It is recommended that these alterations form part of an agreed outcome between the Dorset Council and Launceston and North-East Railway organisation....⁹⁹

- 4.24 The Lilydale Progress Association in its written submission, received 30 October 2018, advised:

At a meeting last night of the Lilydale District Progress Association (LDPA), it was agreed that the State Government brokered compromise is a clear signal for all interested parties to end divisive debate and to start to work together for the benefit of all. Further it provides much needed clarify to the proponents, the community, local business, prospective investors, future corridor managers and all regulatory bodies.

Two motions were put to the meeting and passed by a significant majority. These were:

"The Lilydale District Progress Association (LDPA) supports, unconditionally, the compromise position articulated by the Tasmanian State Government in relation to the future of the North East railway corridor. The LDPA would like to congratulate the State Government on making a reasoned and informed decision that is in the best interests of the Lilydale District community."¹⁰⁰

- 4.25 Dorset Council in its written submission stated:

The compromise position of the State Government is imminently far more sensible and sustainable as it would require maintenance of approximately 10km of rail infrastructure whilst providing a train trip of around 20km from Launceston to Lilydale Falls.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Written submission 32, City of Launceston, p.7

¹⁰⁰ Written submission 19, Lilydale District Progress Association, p.1

¹⁰¹ Written submission 40, Dorset Council, p.2

4.26 NERT, in its written submission, stated:

*NERT adopted the position of accepting the Government's position as a workable and a well-researched compromise. NERT believed that adopting this position would help all stakeholders set aside differences and was a way forward.*¹⁰²

4.27 However, Stephen Zvillis in his written submission did not agree with the compromise solution:

With the State Government finally recognising the groundswell of community support for the railway, they have tried to impose a compromise option to satisfy both proposals. The compromise is unworkable in its current form, as it denies the railway access to its main potential business generators, Lilydale Falls, Denison Gorge, the transit of the tunnel and the destination of Scottsdale. The Launceston City Council in subsequently defining the dividing point of the rail and trail sectors as the commercial boundary, then shifted the Denison Gorge and Tunnel into the rail sector (while still isolated from Scottsdale) whilst the trail ended up with no on-line attractions at all, completely undermining any residual chance of viability.

And

*The existing compromise is also unworkable due to the aggressive and personal nature of the debate about the preferred use of the rail corridor...*¹⁰³

4.28 Rail Trails Australia advised that it supported the Government's compromise position:

*Rail Trails Australia (RTA) strongly supports the Tasmanian government's balanced proposal for the North East Railway Corridor, to allow a two-stage tourist railway from Coldwater Creek to Lilydale and extend the successful rail trail from Scottsdale to Lilydale Falls and Lilydale.*¹⁰⁴

Community support

4.29 A number of submissions and witnesses made the point that community support was critical for either project to be successful.

4.30 Mr Ravens made the following statement:

*You have to have a community onside; you have to have a community owning the project, and you have to have a community working day and night to bring it all together.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Written submission 25, NERT, p.6

¹⁰³ Written submission 12, Stephen Zvillis, p.4

¹⁰⁴ Written submission 46, Rail Trails Australia, p.1

¹⁰⁵ Hansard transcript, Robert Ravens, 5 February 2019, p.23

- 4.31 The Committee received evidence of the importance of community support to the Yarra Valley Railway. Mr Whelan advised:

*To give you an idea of the amount of community support the project has, we have just finished completing the number of volunteer hours that have gone into the project. This is purely a volunteer project; there is very little in the way of paid contractors. We do have people who come with skills to the railway but they come, even in their professional guise, as volunteers 99 per cent of the time. We have just finished tallying those numbers. Last year, we had over 70 000 volunteer hours go into the project. That came about with 500 to 550 individual volunteers from 10 different community groups. The project is quite wide-reaching.*¹⁰⁶

- 4.32 Tourism Northern Tasmania concluded its written submission with:

*Finally, the community deserves better than to be held to ransom by this issue. When compared to the larger issues the North East needs to be unified behind and address, the great opportunities being presented to it, this drawn out debate needs to end. It has soaked up a hugely disproportional amount of time and energy compared to the value of any eventual outcome. The community deserves better than to be subjected to this on-going vendetta prosecuted by the few, distracting the many from attending to what's really important.*¹⁰⁷

- 4.33 NERAF forwarded the results of a ReachTEL survey of 693 residents in the Dorset municipality on 4 October 2017:

*"Thinking about the North East Rail line, do you support or oppose The North East Rail Line be reopened for tourist rail services?"*¹⁰⁸

	Total	Female	Male	18-34	35-50	51-65	65+
Strongly support	59.7%	59.1%	60.4%	94.9%	41.6%	55.6%	55.9%
Support	9.9%	10.7%	9.0%	0.0%	13%	11.1%	14.7%
Undecided	15.0%	20.1%	9.7%	5.1%	27.3%	12.2%	11.8%
Oppose	6.8%	6.7%	6.9%	0.0%	6.5%	10.0%	8.8%
Strongly oppose	8.5%	3.4%	13.9%	0.0%	11.7%	11.1%	8.8%

- 4.34 NERT provided a petition in support of the proposed North East Rail Trail signed by 860 individuals.¹⁰⁹

Signed this 6th day of August 2019



Hon Ivan Dean MLC
Committee Chair



Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC
Inquiry Chair

¹⁰⁶ Hansard transcript, Brett Whelan, 16 Apr 2019, p.2

¹⁰⁷ Written submission 52, Tourism Northern Tasmania, p.14

¹⁰⁸ Written submission 10, NERAF, p.10

¹⁰⁹ Written submission 25, NERT, Attachment 4

APPENDIX 1: MEETINGS, SUBMISSIONS AND WITNESSES

Meetings conducted and attendance

Date/Location	Armitage	Armstrong	Dean	Farrell	Howlett	Lovell	Rattray
8 October 2018, Hobart	✓	✓	✓		×	n/a	✓
10 October 2018, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	n/a	✓
1 November 2018, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓
23 November 2018, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 February 2019, Launceston	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6 February 2019, Scottsdale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8 May 2019, Yarra Valley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10-11 May 2019, New Zealand	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
20 May 2019, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30 May 2019, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 July 2019, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	×	✓
16 July 2019, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	n/a	×	×	✓
17 July 2019, Hobart	✓	✓	✓	n/a	×	✓	✓
18 July 2019 Hobart	✓	✓	✓	n/a	×	✓	✓
1 August 2019 Hobart	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓

Submissions

No.	Name
1	Cherry Top Farmstay
2	Gil Baxter
3	Robert Dickinson
4	Ian and Jenny Scott
5	Jean Guilbert
6	Gary Long
7	George Hyde
8	Diane and Peter Morgan
9	Dennis Camplin
10	North East Residents & Farmers Inc. (NERAF)
11	John Dale Orchard
12	Stephen Zvillis
13	Peter Dowde

Submissions cont'

No.	Name
14	Michael Fox
15	Janet and John Best
16	Di Elliffe
17	Stuart Rainbow
18	Marie Spencer
19	Lilydale Progress Association
20	Torey Taylor
21	Marc Mumford
22	Helen Millar
23	Arvier Family
24	Paul Cabalzar
25	North East Recreational Trail Inc. (NERT)
26	Carmencita Palermo
27	Mike & Kathryn Scott
28	Anna Povey
29	Phenton & Jenny Gardam
30	Tamar Bicycle Users Group
31	Craig Webb
32	Launceston City Council
33	Leaning Church Vineyard
34	Ross Harris
35	Iain O'Neill
36	TasRail
37	Philip Wayne
38	Cycling Tasmania
39	Harry Rigney
40	Dorset Council
41	Launceston and North East Railway (with 20 attachments)
42	Andy Goodacre
43	Susan Denny
44	Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Inc. (ATHRA)
45	David Payne
46	Rail Trails Australia
47	Tasmanian Veterans Cycling Council
48	Tim Fischer
49	Bicycle Network Tasmania
50	Brian Khan
51	TCIG Pty Ltd
52	Tourism Northern Tasmania
53	Clynton Brown
54	Harrison Greg
55	Ross Broomhall
56	Yarra Valley Railway
57	Edwina Powell
58	Deborah Collings
59	Michael de Bomford
60	Bridestowe Estate
61	Wayne Venn
62	Government (with 4 attachments)
63	David Osmond

Hearings and witnesses

5 February 2019, Launceston

- Wendy McLennan, Community Liaison Officer, L&NER
- Chris Martin, L&NER
- Paul Cabalzar, L&NER
- David Payne, L&NER
- Ross Broomhall, L&NER
- Brian Khan, L&NER
- Robert Ravens, Managing Director, Bridestowe Estate
- Collin Burns, Executive Officer Cycling Tasmania
- Malcolm Cowan, Representative Tamar Bicycle Users Group
- Malcolm Reid, Representative Tamar Bicycle Users Group
- Marie Spencer, Treasurer Tamar Bicycle Users Group

6 February 2019, Scottsdale

- Stuart Bryce, Chair North East Residents and Farmers (NERAF)
- Edwina Powell, NERAF
- Kent Rattray, NERAF
- Wendy McLennan, NERAF
- Mike Scott, local farmer
- Greg Howard, Mayor, Dorset Council

16 April 2019, Launceston

- Brett Whelan, President, Yarra Valley Railway
- Sue McCarrey, National Rail Regulator, Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator
- Peter Clements, Principal Rail Safety Officer, Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator
- Damian McCrohan, President, Rail Trails Aus Inc.

17 April 2019, Launceston

- Chris Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Northern Tasmania
- Ray Brien, Secretary Tasmanian Veterans Cycling Council
- Prof. David Adams, Pro Vice Chancellor, Community Partnerships and Regional Development, University of Tasmania
- Grant Craig, President Federation of Rail Organisations New Zealand (FRONZ)
- Chris Martin, Chair Association of Tourism and Heritage Rail Aus Inc
- Mandy Millar

8 May 2019, Yarra Valley

- Brett Whelan, President, Yarra Valley Railway

10 May 2019, New Zealand

- Kate Wilson, Councillor Dunedin City Council, Chair Otago Central Rail Trail Trust
- Tania Murphy, Manager Otago Central Rail Trail
- Barrie Wills, Councillor Central Otago Council
- Steve Jeffery, Roxburgh Gorge Trail Trust
- Anthony Longman, Central Otago Council Digital and Social Media Marketing Specialist
- Dylan Rushbrook, General Manager Tourism Central Otago
- Murray Paterson, Clutha Gold Trail Charitable Trust
- Rod Peirce, Clutha Gold Trail Charitable Trust

Hearings and witnesses cont'

20 May 2019, Hobart

- Craig Richards, CEO, Bicycle Network
- Allison Hetherington, Public Affairs Adviser Tasmania, Bicycle Network
- Mike Scott, Vice President, North East Rail Trail Inc.
- Richard Forrest, Treasurer, North East Rail Trail Inc.
- Michael Lowe, Secretary, North East Rail Trail Inc.
- Glenn Moore, Committee Member, North East Rail Trail Inc.

30 May 2019, Hobart

- Peter Gutwein MP, Treasurer, Government of Tasmania
- Nic Waldron, Adviser

APPENDIX 2

ONRSR Ref: A1010295
Your Ref:



5 July 2019

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Ms Natasha Exel
Inquiry Secretary
Legislative Council
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HOBART TAS 7000

Email: natasha.exel@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Exel

ONRSR Submission to the Inquiry into Tasmania's North-East Railway Corridor

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry.

The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) is the responsible and independent regulator for administering Rail Safety National Law across Australia including Tasmania.

The principal objective of ONRSR is to facilitate the safe operation of rail transport services across Australia. This is achieved through regulation of the rail industry in accordance with RSNL, supporting regulations, policies and guidelines, and promotion of safety as a fundamental objective in the delivery of rail transport services. The RSNL places a duty on rail transport operators to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of their railway operations. It also imposes a shared responsibility through general duties on all parties, rail safety workers, other persons involved in the rail industry, the regulator and the public to ensure the safety of railway operations.

ONRSR's submission is in response to a request by the Inquiry for ONRSR representatives to accompany Committee Members on an inspection of the North East Rail Corridor. This took place on 13 June 2019 with the assistance of TasRail through their provision of hi-rail transport on the sections rail line itself where this was possible.

The ONRSR staff involved have specialist expertise in structures, track and civil infrastructure, railway operations and rail safety.

An inspection report is attached for consideration by the Inquiry. It is based on observations made over portions of the North-East Rail Corridor. While it should not be considered a comprehensive report of the complete corridor, it provides useful information on typical infrastructure condition and typical works required to enable railway operations to commence.

Please contact me on 08 8406 1511 if you would like to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. McCarrey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sue McCarrey
National Rail Safety Regulator

Enc:

North East Rail Corridor Inquiry

Inspection Report

13 June 2019



safe railways for Australia

Objective Document ID:	A1010283	
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Details:	Authorising Officer	Date
Final report	Sue McCarrey	5 July, 2019

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1 Background

Members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council Inquiry in to the North East Rail Corridor, requested ONRSR accompany them on an inspection of the track and structures of the former Coldwater Creek (near Launceston) to Scottsdale railway. Members wished to see the rail corridor and infrastructure first-hand and have the opportunity to receive independent advice from ONRSR on asset condition. This included an opinion on the likely extent of repair works to make the line serviceable as a possible tourist and heritage railway.

Train services between Coldwater Creek and Scottsdale (a distance of approximately 63km) ceased in 2006 and since then the line has been in 'non-operational' status. The Rail Infrastructure Manager, TasRail, undertakes periodic patrols (understood to be annually) by hi-rail to control weeds and inspect for public danger.

Although track infrastructure has been left in place little maintenance has occurred since 2006 except for minimal works to allow the operation of hi-rail vehicles for inspection purposes.

2 Methodology

ONRSR representatives accompanied Members of the Inquiry making observations on the now disused railway.

TasRail provided two Road Rail Vehicles (RRV) and drivers for the inspection.

Sections of track and several bridge structures were inspected to make an informed opinion of what works may be required to return the line to operational railway status.

The tour party travelled over some 20.1km of the North East line, covering:

- > ~8.9 km (Turners Marsh) to ~20.3 km (Lalla Rd Lilydale); and
- > ~28.9 km (Tunnel Station Rd, Tunnel) to ~37.6 km (Shepherds Rivulet, Wyena).

The inspection covered portions of the North East Rail Corridor. The observations and conclusions in this report should not be considered comprehensive of total corridor condition.

2.1 Context of possible railway operations

The Launceston & North East Railway (L & NER) Strategic Plan Sept v1 October 2017 proposes that the railway would be upgraded and returned to service in four stages.

- > Stage 1 - 2017/18 Lilydale - Wyena
- > Stage 2 - 2018/19 Lilydale – Turners Marsh
- > Stage 3 - 2019/20 Restoration to Scottsdale
- > Stage 4 - 2020/21 Turners Marsh – Coldwater Creek

As the context of possible railway operations has yet to be defined, the observations in this report are based on the following assumptions of the type of railway operations that might be undertaken:

- > Rolling stock
 - self-propelled heritage diesel rail motor passenger cars (up to 8 tonne axle load)
 - Diesel locomotive and steam locomotive (up to 16 tonne axle load) hauling heritage passenger carriages
- > Frequency of operations - approximately weekly
- > Speed of operations - up to 40 km/h
- > Single train operation on the line at any one time
 - Safeworking system - staff and ticket
 - It is noted there are currently minimal facilities for rail services to pass / cross along the route.

No documented standards are available for the proposed tourist railway operation on the North East rail line. For the purposes of this inspection the infrastructure was observed using standards, that in ONRSR's experience, would be typical of a likely comparable tourist and heritage railway.

3 Observations and conclusions

3.1 Track and Civil

Observed rail track was varied, from good in some sections requiring only checking of alignment, to quite poor in other sections where restraint of rails due to poor sleepers or ineffective fixings was severely lacking. Some sections of track will require spot repairs, where others may require extensive repair or full replacement.

Steel sleepers comprise approximately 60% of the corridor and do not require replacement. It is estimated that a further 10% of sleepers (timber) in the corridor have been preservative (creosote) treated and also do not require replacement.

The remaining 30% of sleepers (timber) are not preservative treated, are life expired and will require replacement.

A full track assessment and geometry check should be done by qualified persons checking the track against the operator's selected (and risk assessed) track standards to determine the scope of repairs necessary before rail operations commence.

Track formation, ballast, trackside vegetation, drainage, cutting and slope stability, and culvert condition varies between reasonable to poor and will need to be reviewed for compliance with the operator's selected (and risk assessed) standards.

3.2 Level crossings

All public road level crossings will need to be reviewed for compliance with the operator's track standards, Australian Standard AS1742.7 and the Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model (ALCAM). This is with regard to the level of protection to be provided, sight distances for road and railway drivers, and line marking / signage requirements for each crossing.

Any installation of protection at a crossing will need to be 'type approved'. Novel systems, if proposed, will need to be trialled, tested and demonstrated successful, and then 'type approved' before they are installed.

Advice to ONRSR indicates that compliant 'type approved' active protection at a level crossing typically costs in excess of \$250,000 per installation. However, many level crossing locations cost significantly more if access to services is remote or problematic.

Private level crossings will need to be assessed and protocols developed to provide for the safety of road and rail users.

All road / rail level crossings and all bridges (rail-over-road and rail-under-road) will need to have road / rail safety interface agreements completed with respective road owners as required by Rail Safety National Law.

3.3 Railway bridges over rivers and streams

The rail bridges inspected were typically constructed with track laid in ballast, supported by the bridge structure. That is, a ballast-topped bridge.

With the exception of the Second River Bridge (which has steel decking supporting the ballast) all other bridges had timber decking supporting the ballast. All of these had some level of decayed timber in the decking and local loss of ballast support. That is, ballast is falling through the deck, or spilling over the side of the deck, or both.

Each of the timber decked bridges will need substantial repairs. This will involve removing the rails, sleepers, ballast and decayed decking in order to make the repairs necessary to support the track. The rail operator may prefer to change the track support from ballast-topped to transom-topped. This involves bolting transoms (large heavy sleepers) directly to the supporting bridge beams. The rails are then fixed to the top of the transoms. This system of bridge decking can reduce total loading on the bridge structure (because there is no ballast) and is more easily inspected and repaired in to the future. However, this approach may add the need for adjustments in the vertical alignment (height) of the rail on the bridge as well as the need to adjust the vertical alignment of the track approaching the bridge from both sides.

Any modifications proposed for the bridges will require detailed engineering assessment and design, constructed by those competent to do so and have engineering certification when complete.

The railway bridge at Shepherds Rivulet at Wyena was observed as being close to collapse and will need to be substantially or fully replaced.

3.4 Conclusions

The track and civil infrastructure appears to be in fair condition and could be made serviceable for tourist and heritage operations, albeit with significant labour and material input.

However, there is substantial work required on each of the existing ballast-topped bridges. In general, the repairs to the rail bridges will involve specialist works requiring professional design and supervision, competent workers, competent supervision, and professional certification before railway operations are resumed. Access issues (including working at height) may also require construction methods and machines outside those readily available to a part-time volunteer labour force.

Each level crossing on the line also requires a safety assessment. It is reasonable to assume those that previously had active protection (light and bells as a minimum) will need to have that reinstated. Typically, active protection costs at least \$250,000 per installation. Other level crossings that previously had passive protection may now also require active protection due to changes in standards and traffic movements.

It was noted that there were few locations where adjacent roads for maintenance vehicle access were available. That is, access to the rail corridor for maintenance purposes is predominantly by rail using the railway line itself. This factor may substantially impact on the logistics and associated costs of undertaking track and structure maintenance.

The following documentation will need to be completed prior to a Tourist and Heritage operation commencing.

- > A Safety Management System (SMS) covering the scope of operation proposed by the Rail Transport Operator for assessment and endorsement by ONRSR.
- > Basic documents necessary to complete the infrastructure assessment include, but are not limited to:-
 - Railway performance criteria
 - rolling stock axle load
 - rolling stock operational speed
 - service frequency
- > Infrastructure engineering standards (and confirmation the standards are risk assessed as fit for the proposed railway operations)
- > Detailed engineering inspection / condition assessment reports of safety critical infrastructure
- > Detailed Asset Register
- > A line wide engineering audit and assessment to accurately scope the necessary works
- > Level crossing safety inspection (ALCAM) assessments
 - Due to the acute angles at many level crossings where the railway and road intersect, active protection (that is, lights and bells as a minimum) will almost certainly be required.

Appendix 1: Infrastructure requirements

In addition to defining the operational context, the following would need to be developed for the railway to operate (this would typically include but not be limited to):

- > Stations / platforms / appropriate facilities at terminal locations and as required at intermediate points of interest.
- > Facilities for ticketing, railway offices, staff and public amenities, car parking areas.
- > Facilities for stabling rolling stock
- > Workshop facilities for rolling stock maintenance
- > Storage for tools, maintenance manuals, railway materials storage areas, and potentially fuel.
- > Technical standards for rolling stock, track and civil, drainage, and bridges need to be determined by the Rail Transport Operator (RTO)
 - consistent with the proposed operational context or adopted from other sources and risk assessed by the RTO to assure the adequacy of the standards to manage associated operational and safety risks.
- > A Safety Management System (SMS) would need to be outlined for development (in compliance with Rail Safety National Law) as part of the railway accreditation submission process to be reviewed by ONRSR.
- > Definition of roles, responsibilities and required competencies for all safety critical personnel (whether full or part-time, paid or volunteers).
 - This includes setting minimum requirements for daily operations with respect to track infrastructure, rolling stock, and competent operational staff (including drivers, train control, and passenger facilities and control).
- > Development of an asset data recording system with documentation of:-
 - asset location
 - asset type
 - inspection frequencies and processes
 - last inspected and next inspection due dates
 - drawings / specifications / maintenance documents
 - inspection reports
 - current defects and their operational impact
- > An audit of the existing railway assets would need to be undertaken by competent persons to compare asset condition to minimum base operating conditions and desirable operating conditions as defined in the standards.
 - This audit would be used to develop essential works requirements prior to the commencement of operation and then for longer term maintenance schedules.
- > Development / identification of an appropriate safe-working system to manage and control railway operations maintenance access to the corridor.
- > Development of safety interface agreements with adjacent or connecting railways (if any).
- > Development of safety interface agreements with road authorities for road / rail level crossings and bridges.

- > Assessment and review of all level crossings of the railway to determine their compliance with track standards, Australian Standard AS 1742.7 and ALCAM with regard to:-
 - level of protection to be provided
 - sight distances for road and railway drivers
 - line marking / signage requirements for the crossings
 - Private crossings being assessed and protocols developed to provide for safety of road and rail users.

Appendix 2: Summary of rail infrastructure layout and condition

The following summary is based on observations made over portions of the North East Rail Corridor and should not be considered a comprehensive report of total corridor condition.

Railway bridges

The rail bridges inspected were typically constructed with track laid in ballast, supported by the bridge structure. That is, a ballast-topped bridge.

With the exception of the Second River Bridge (which has steel decking supporting the ballast) all other bridges had timber decking supporting the ballast. All of these had some level of decayed timber in the decking and local loss of ballast support. That is, ballast is falling through the deck, or spilling over the side of the deck, or both.

The railway bridge at Shepherds Rivulet at Wyena was observed as being close to collapse and will need to be substantially or fully replaced.

Typical existing track layout

Curves predominate and interconnecting straights are generally short except at former station locations. Tangents (straight track) are longer in the open country sections towards Wyena.

Curves are generally laid with steel sleepers although some medium radii curves are laid in a mixture of steel and timber, with some larger radii curves laid in just timber sleepers.

Tangents are generally laid with timber sleepers although some sections are laid with a mixture of steel and timber sleepers.

Typical existing track geometry

A track geometry survey will be required using a track geometry recording trolley (or similar) before railway operations commence to identify and classify defects in top, line, cant, superelevation, twist and gauge.

Visual inspections indicate that the track geometry generally appears fit for purpose. Several isolated vertical / lateral track buckles require realignment. Slacks and kinks are present in several curves and will require string-lining and realignment.

Typical existing track construction

Rail is a combination of 60lb/yard and 80lb/yard, and some of the rail is located on oversize sleeper plates.

Rails are generally laid in long rail strings typical for long welded rail (LWR).

Many rail joints appear to be frozen, dipped with gaps, fishbolts are seized and loose with evidence that fishbolts have been deformed due to the longitudinal stresses put on them by the rail.

Rail anchors were observed in sections of timber sleepers where dog-spike fastenings are used and on some of the steeper grades.

Rail joint gaps need to be adjusted in several sections on down grades where track buckles are present.

Typical railway sleeper condition

All steel sleepers appear to be in fair condition and serviceable, however, the condition and extent of ballast packing of sleeper pod is unknown.



Typical condition steel sleepered track - Turners Marsh

Most non-treated timber sleepers have sleeper plates with a mixture of pandrol / lockspikes and trackloc / dogspike fastenings. Their condition is variable but generally poor to very poor, and generally life-expired.

Small sections of non-treated timber sleepers are unplated with dogspike and springspike fastenings. All unplated sleepers appear life expired.



Typical condition of non-treated timber sleepered track - Lalla.



Typical condition non-treated timber sleepered track - Denison Gorge.

Some relatively short sections of track (typically sections of 50m - 100m) have been constructed using timber sleepers c1975 treated with creosote. The majority of these treated sleepers appear to be in serviceable condition.

Interspersed timber sleepers installed after 1975 but not treated with creosote are life expired.



Typical condition of treated timber sleepered track - Lalla

An assessment undertaken by Raylink Consulting on behalf of Infrastructure Tasmania in July 2017, estimated approximately 40% of sleepers are timber, the remainder steel.

This assumption varies significantly with an assessment carried out at the same time and outlined in a report by Bob Vanselow on behalf of L & NER that calculated 70% of the sleepers in the track are timber.

The differences in the estimated numbers of sleeper types may be due to differences in sampling track sections along the corridor. However, in the section from Turners Marsh to Wyena, the estimate from Raylink consulting would appear consistent with that observed by ONRSR.

Based on the ONRSR's observations of the corridor between Turners Marsh and Wyena, steel sleepers appeared to comprise approximately 60% of the corridor and do not require replacement. It is estimated that a further 10% of sleepers (timber) in the corridor have been preservative treated and also do not require replacement.

The remaining 30% of sleepers are un-treated timber, are life expired and will require a significant program of replacement. This may be as much as one timber sleeper in every two initially (i.e. prior to commencing operations) with the program continuing to replace the remaining life expired sleepers in the short term.

Contact with and / or disposal of creosote treated timber will need to comply with WHS and EPA requirements.

Typical ballast and drainage condition

Ballast ~32mm with a 0mm - 150mm shoulder. The ballast depth is unknown and assumed to be 150mm. Ballasting work is required where the ballast shoulder has been lost due to erosion or the inappropriate operation of rubber tyred vehicles.

Ballast condition is heavily fouled, and ballast drainage is generally poor. The extent of ballast cleaning will depend on the final operational requirements for the L & NER operations and the effectiveness of the drainage works.

Extensive sections where cess drains and cut off drains are heavily silted and blocked through cuttings.

General cleaning and re-establishment of cess drains, cut off drains and general drainage works are required.

Appendix 3: Summary of infrastructure works

The following summary is based on observations made over portions of the North East Rail Corridor and should not be considered a comprehensive report of total corridor works.

Railway bridges

Each of the timber decked bridges will need substantial repairs. This will involve removing the rails, sleepers, ballast and decayed decking in order to make the repairs necessary to support the track.

The rail operator may prefer to change the track support from ballast-topped to transom-topped. This involves bolting transoms (large heavy sleepers) directly to the supporting bridge beams. The rails are then fixed to the top of the transoms. This system of bridge decking can reduce total loading on the bridge structure (because there is no ballast) and is more easily inspected and repaired in to the future. However, this approach may add the need for adjustments in the vertical alignment (height) of the rail on the bridge as well as the need to adjust the vertical alignment of the track approaching the bridge from both sides.

In general, the repairs or modifications to the rail bridges will involve specialist works requiring professional engineering design, competent workers, competent supervision, and professional certification before railway operations are resumed. Access issues (including working at height) may also require construction methods and machines outside those readily available to a part-time volunteer labour force.

Track and civil infrastructure

Although much of the basic track infrastructure ironwork (rails, steel sleepers, platework etc) is sound, the majority of timber components (timber sleepers, crossing timbers, etc) are life expired and will need to be replaced.

Extensive drain cleaning and drainage works are required.

Extensive vegetation removal and trimming is required.

While level crossing safety inspections (ALCAM) will be required it is envisaged that due to the acute angles of many of the level crossing locations that active level crossing protection will be required.

Most cutting batters (sides) and embankments appear to be in a fair, although overgrown, condition and following clearance and inspection are expected to be fit for service.

Track alignment

- > Track alignment. Section predominately successive curves with short [if any] straight connections. Straights typically up to 50-100m long.
- > Curves predominately steel sleepers.
 - Tangents timber sleepers or mixture of steel / timber sleepers
 - Track geometry alignment is generally serviceable. However, several slacks and kinks on curves need to be string-lined and realigned. Several buckled sections need to be rectified and the rail creep assessed and adjusted to ensure non-reoccurrence.

Track infrastructure

- > Rail condition is generally serviceable.
- > Rail joint condition is generally serviceable. Rail joints are dipped with fishplates and fishbolts in poor condition only fit for T&H operation. Rail joint gaps need to be adjusted in several sections on down-grades where track buckles are present.

Track sleepers

- > The track in steel sleepers is in fair condition with little remedial work necessary. Steel sleeper track comprise an estimated 60% of the corridor.
- > Several short sections of timber sleepers that have been treated with preservative are in fair condition, but these sections are in the minority. Estimated 10% of the corridor.
- > Tracks where timber sleepers without treatment with preservatives, were found to be either life expired or close to life expired. Expect most if not all such sleepers to be replaced. Typically, a heavy timber sleeper tie replacement will be required. Perhaps as intense as replacing 1:2 timber sleepers.

Ballast and drainage

- > Ballast is heavily fouled, generally poor ballast drainage. The extent of ballast cleaning will depend on the final operational requirements for the L&NER operations and the effectiveness of the drainage works.
- > Extensive sections where cess drains and cut off drains are heavily silted and blocked through cuttings. General cleaning and re-establishment of cess drains, cut off drains and general drainage works are required.

Turnouts and crossing loops

- > Turnouts
 - Points, crossings and rails are generally present and appear visually to be serviceable.
 - Remainder of turnout infrastructure not assessed but crossing timbers are expected to be life expired.
 - Points operation mechanisms were not assessed.
- > The mode, type frequency and operations for the proposed railway service is unclear and no terminus infrastructure currently exists at Turners Marsh or Wyena. However for functionality as a tourist and heritage terminus the following typical infrastructure would usually be required when operating locomotive-hauled rolling stock.
 - Run-around siding
 - (required if and when locomotive hauled trains operate for the locomotive to change from one end of the train to the other)
- > Siding for storage of carriages, wagons, on-track plant.
- > Passenger facilities (building), carpark, etc.

Level Crossings

- > Vegetation should be removed or trimmed as necessary to comply with the line of sight, and transit space requirements.
- > A site-specific assessment of the track condition through the level crossings will be required to determine the track condition.
- > A Safety Interface Agreement (SIA) will need to be prepared and undertaken with the relevant road authority.
- > All level crossings to be reviewed for compliance with track standards and to comply with Australian Standard AS1742.7, AS7658 and ALCAM regarding the level of protection to be provided. It is expected that substantial work needs to be undertaken at each level crossing to install the appropriate standard of safety equipment.
 - Level crossings on public roads
 - Due to the angle at which the road and railway intersect at many of level crossings it is likely they will need to be upgraded to active protection which includes lights, bells, possibly boom gates, signage, and line marking on the road. This would be determined through the ALCAM process.
 - It is possible that the railway track through pavement portion of these crossings may need renewal.
 - Level crossings at private roads.
 - Assessment will be required against AS1742.7. It is likely that many of these level crossings will need to be reinstalled to passive protection which includes signage and / or gates.
 - It is possible that the railway track through the pavement portion of these crossings may need renewal.

Track embankment and cutting stability

- > Most cutting batters and embankment appear to be in a fair, although overgrown, condition and following clearance and inspection are expected to be fit for service.
- > Vegetation should be removed or trimmed as necessary to comply with the line of sight, and transit space requirements.
- > Several isolated locations where embankment erosion and ballast attrition were noted.
 - Spot re-ballasting will be required.

Track within the tunnel

- > The track within the tunnel appears to be in fair condition.
- > Timber sleepers have been treated with creosote and appear in serviceable condition.
- > Tunnel drainage needs to be improved to provide a more direct flow of water through the tunnel away from the track infrastructure.
- > The track on the approach and departure to the tunnel was fouled and drainage flowed over the tracks.
 - Drains were completely silted.
- > Current drainage is ineffective and does not control water flow leading to some sections being completely silted and other sections with erosion undercutting the sleepers in the track.