

Ms. Natasha Exel,  
Inquiry Secretary,  
Legislative Council,  
Parliament House HOBART, TAS 7000

**SUBMISSION TO:  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 'B'  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR ENQUIRY**

Dear Honourable Members,

Firstly I would like to note I am writing this submission from my personal views, actions and opinions, but also that I am presently vice chairman for Launceston & North East Railway (L&NER) formally known as Diesel Traction Tasmania (DTT).

I would like to cover the history of L&NER and how it has evolved from a small group of railway enthusiasts to the much larger community orientated group it is today. As this shows already the diversity and number of people that are involved with this significant project.

The group then known as Diesel Traction Tasmania was formed on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2011 by 12 railway enthusiasts and Tasrail employees, whom were concerned about the impending withdrawal and disposal of TasRail's unique but ageing English Electric locomotive fleet. This came about due to none of the other Tasmanian heritage railway museums/operators showing any firm interest in preserving the large mainline locomotives.

In June 2012 Tasrail donated ZC class locomotive 2144, **now the last of its class left**. This left the group the task to find their locomotive a home. The former Launceston Round House site was the proposed location. In the mind of a railway enthusiast it was a great location, room for more railway items, historical site links etc etc.

Unfortunately for the group there was not a lot of support for their Round House plan and after some meetings with the Launceston City Council the idea stagnated. It was at this stage in July 2014 I joined the group, but quickly worked out that if we were to save these particular locomotives, we needed to make something that appealed to tourists and the community as a whole. A special general meeting was held to inspect some alternate sites in the greater Launceston area. A disused siding at Mowbray or the north east line was suggested. Being as it was close to Launceston, scenic, unused and in good condition. To that end a sub-committee was formed to concentrate on a North East line proposal.

Whilst the task of finding a suitable site to restore our locomotive and set up a museum was simmering away, Tasrail advised that a second locomotive, ZB class 2122 and another engine/generator set for 2144 had been kindly donated.

*Note Both locomotives and parts are kindly being stored on our behalf by Tasrail at their East Tamar Depot. Until we can get access to the North East Line*

Unbeknown to us we were not the only group to notice the NE line was laying idle and disused for a number of years.

The Tonganah to Billy cock rail trail was a relative success only stopped due to landowner pressure from progressing any further East towards Legerwood. With that a new approach was taken. Dorset Council, Scottsdale Rotary Club and a newly formed rail trail group based in Lilydale, applied for and were successful in obtaining a grant for the conversion of the railway into rail trail. **Unchallenged and without sufficient public/community consultation.**

*Note, The section from Tonganah to Scottsdale was removed around this time, with no opposition from DTT as it had no tourist potential and was better suited to the railtrail. Although this **did not include** the Scottsdale railway.*

With this news a couple of well attended community meetings were held in the North East in opposition to removal of the railway line. On the third of these meetings I attended with the discussion soon coming to the suggestion of a tourist railway, I promptly stood up introduced myself and explained DTT's rough ideas for the line. Several smaller meetings between DTT and the then unnamed community group, eventually becoming NERAF, happened until DTT called a general meeting. This meeting was held at the Turners Marsh Fire Brigade Station with the North East community invited to attend. With their input and support DTT voted in the proposal to pursue the North east line as their future home over the Mowbray siding option.

From this meeting the DTT membership started to grow, from not only a group of rail enthusiasts but into a much broader community group.

With this input the group soon took on a new trading name, Launceston & North East Railway. This also introduced "non rail fan members" to the board.

Offers/pledges of help now came in many forms. For example rail collected free of charge from Bell Bay by a local logging company, to offers of help with designing a business proposal. This is now known as the 'Lebski Report' and was distributed to members of parliament at the time of the "Strategic Infrastructure Corridors Act"

Also around this time a rail-car and trailer were purchased for L&NER use from the Burnie City Council and also transported to Karoola by a Launceston businessman. This alone to date is a quarter of a million dollar investment! Another investment made on our behalf was the commissioning of a track condition report, at the request of Launceston City Council. This was financed by Bridestowe Lavender Farm owner Robert Ravens, as he sees the railway as a great community based tourist asset.

At present L&NER are working most Wednesday and Saturdays on readying the rail-car DP14 for service on private property at Karoola. This site is being provided at no cost again by another local resident showing the level of support we have in the community. Many of the members that turn up are not train or rail enthusiasts but rather supporters of the project, some even travelling down semi regularly from NSW for a working holiday!

In closing I'll give my personal opinion, as I know you have been sent in many reports so I don't feel the need to touch on the same again. This project has the potential not to just save the line but to preserve its history and the history of some of the rarest diesel electric locomotives in the world, in a working form. Because of this it has captured the minds, and support, of the community. Its history, support, location and scenery L&NER has the potential to grow to a major self-funding tourist attraction.

Having the full line to Scottdale would allow a world a world class tourist railway unrivalled in the world. It would also allow for a direct Launceston to Scottdale tourist connection something now lacking. Using the Scottdale station area would give us a chance to build a secondary museum and include the men's shed group in a Scottdale based workshop. This, along with the Turners Marsh workshop, would provide all known the benefits to community. Plus the benefit of seeing the results used to invest back into the community. It would also see a better profit for L&NER, again better for the community.

Finally, I would like to thank the Honourable Members for this chance to give my input to this much needed inquiry.

Yours Sincerely

Clynton Brown

Vice Chairman, L&NER