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**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSIONAL COMMITTEE GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION 'B' MET IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, GROUND FLOOR,
HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON TUESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2019**

NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY

**Ms WENDY McLENNAN, Mr CHRIS MARTIN, Mr PAUL CABALZAR, Mr DAVID
PAYNE AND Mr ROSS BROOMHALL**, LAUNCESTON AND NORTH-EAST RAILWAY,
WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Ms Armitage) - Thank you all for coming along today. The evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege but I need to remind you that any comments you make outside this hearing may not be afforded such privilege. The evidence is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. We are seeking information specifically relating to the terms of reference.

Ms McLENNAN - I thank the Legislative Councillors for this inquiry. Up until this inquiry there has been no public process associated with the reports from the consultants.

The North East railway has been in place for 150 years and now there is a sudden urgent need to remove it. It was the only railway in the state to have actually made money. The Launceston and North East Rail - LNER - group came together because of the lack of consultation with the public, the farmers and residents along the railway line, and their expertise to create a railway experience on the north-east line. However, there was a determined push to have a bike path regardless of any public opinion. No other alternative use to the rail corridor was sought.

As the farmers and residents along the line were attempting to be heard about why a rail trail was not acceptable to them, LNER believed they could resurrect the line and create a viable service after the success of what Victoria is doing, where there are 20 tourist and heritage railways carrying over 1 million passengers and growing.

We sought advice from Brett Whelan, Yarra Valley Railway, who was amazed at the great condition of our railway and said that if it were in Victoria, there would be a train on it immediately. In Victoria, they had no train operating for 30 years. The line had been pulled up and their bridges were dismantled. They now have a positive cashflow of \$150 000 per year, with the capacity for 200 000 passengers.

The Treasurer recognised there was a need for an inquiry into the viability of the tourist and heritage railway on the north-east line. He stated -

We need to have the facts on the table to ensure that, as a community, we can have an informed discussion about the best use of the rail corridor.

The rail corridor between Launceston and Scottsdale presents a unique opportunity to develop a new experience that will enhance the massive appeal of the region. He allocated \$50 000 for a study into the north-east line.

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Following the consultant's reports, the Department of Infrastructure stated the railway was viable and it was passed to the Department of Treasury. Some assumptions made by Treasury really do need to be refuted. The Department of Treasury stated that if we assert the line has a value of \$40 million, LNER would have a depreciation bill of \$2 million per year. Treasury said -

The depreciation value is the value of the asset now, so replacement value less the life of the components lost and worn.

The book value of the asset is already written off in government books and this is still a government asset. The economic benefits from LNER were also totally ignored.

Business and private investors have contributed over \$2.5 million in pledges to upgrade the railway and establish tourist rail operations. There has already been over \$200 000 spent on a rail car and trailer, as well as associated reports.

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.

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 \$8000 per day and be operated by volunteers, with outgoings only for diesel.

The bike path has a capital cost of over \$3 million. It has no income and no continuing maintenance costs have been provided. There is no provision in the estimate for labour costs. The railway will be operated using private funding, creating jobs, generating income and investment. Thank you. I will pass over to Chris Martin, Chairman of the Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia, who has been a massive adviser to our group.

Mr MARTIN - Thank you, Wendy, and thank you to the members of the Legislative Council for giving us the opportunity to present the case for the north-east railway being preserved. Some members of the Legislative Council may know me from a past campaign, which I successfully waged on the Lake Margaret Power Scheme. In 2006, Hydro were keen to shut the scheme down and turn it into a museum building, create a new modern machine alongside it. The community successfully kept that element of our heritage and it is now a tourist attraction and valuable asset for the future, as an operating heritage icon.

During this period, Tim Fischer became known to me. He was then chairman of Tourism Australia. He wrote a submission at that stage, but now he has written a book about steam railways in Australia. Unfortunately, his chapter about Tasmania says it is a saga of lost opportunity. Let us see what we can do today to turn this around and create some opportunities. I mentioned in my submission some of Tim's comments about the opportunity for fine dining, cuisine and wines to be served while enjoying our scenic countryside. Rail tourism is the best

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way to do this. We have a wonderful state here. To be able to serve fine cuisines and wines on a train while going past our countryside, is a fantastic opportunity. It is one which Tasmania could have had only two years ago. Some friends of mine from Victoria were looking to set up a train service with fine dining on the main line network. They were told by TasRail to forget it and look at non-operational lines. They looked at Bridgewater to Hobart, but it became increasingly difficult to get any traction. They now have a very successful business on the Bellarine Peninsula railway, which I have referenced in my submission. It is booked out well in advance. I wanted to go next weekend but it was fully booked.

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.

The North East line has been a catalyst of many things; in particular community support for this railway has been fantastic, and it should succeed.

I will welcome any questions later.

Mr BROOMHALL - I look after the maintenance and refurbishment of the rail motor we have. We have a good core of volunteers. So far we have lifted the vehicle from its bogies and sent the springs away to be tested and reset. A local company has replaced the air hoses for the braking system and we have quite a few volunteers chafing at the bit at the moment. To keep them busy, we had a trip down to Sheffield and spent a day there laying sleepers. We have all had a bit of practice there.

Mr MARTIN - With the help of the North East people, we replaced 130 sleepers in a day. It was fantastic.

Mr BROOMHALL - As Ivan knows, I am a bit train- and tram-mad.

Mr CABALZAR - I am only here to speak about the hoteliers in Launceston. I have a letter here from Joe Chromy regarding this. I have copies if you want them later.

CHAIR - You could table it perhaps.

Mr CABALZAR - I can, yes. I have half a dozen.

CHAIR - Thanks, Paul. We will hand some out and we will also table it.

Mr CABALZAR - I have some from Dale P from the Colonial Motor Inn. Unfortunately, it has been lost in all this paperwork.

CHAIR - Afterwards maybe you will find it and we can table it.

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Mr CABALZAR - Errol Stewart has been tied up over the last three days and is part-way through his positive submission, which I can get to you. I have busted everything to have it today, but he is under the pump with something. I will answer any questions later.

CHAIR - Thank you, Paul.

Mr PAYNE - I am David Payne; I have worked for TasRail for 39 years and I would like to say my views certainly are not TasRail's. I am here to speak on my own behalf. I do not represent TasRail.

I would like to talk about a fit-for-purpose railway. There is a lot of misinformation about having to spend tens of millions of dollars to have it fit for purpose. Our DP rail car has a five-tonne axle load; some of the locomotives I have driven up there have 16-tonne axle loads.

Mr DEAN - Did you say a five-tonne axle load?

Mr PAYNE - A five-tonne axle load. One of the heaviest wagons we took up the north-east was a HD super wagon that had an 18-tonne axle load. We have many volunteers and donations. One of our benefactors has offered to repair the Karoola Bridge for us. Another local businessman has offered free cartage of 1000 tonnes of sleepers or any other equipment we want moved.

I have had discussions with TasRail and the secretary of Launceston and North East Railway. I have met with them about getting sleepers. Some of the good second-hand sleepers. At the moment they will not give them to us until we actually get a lease on the track so it is a Catch-22 position. As soon as we get something we can operate, they will start donating materials to us. TasRail has already donated a ZC and a ZB locomotive to us. They are sitting down at East Tamar and we have had numerous other donations in time, professional services and equipment.

I have worked for the railway for 39 years. I started off as what would be known as a fireman or an observer, then I drove trains for well over 30 years. I then went on to be a driver trainer so I often train and assess people. I have the qualifications and I am now an operation supervisor at TasRail so I have some administrative and training skills.

A lot of the guys I started on the job with are just recently retired and they are keen to get their teeth into something to continue the comradeship they had on the job and train up some younger people. One of the things we have looked at is nationally accredited training; we believe with Launceston and North-East, it would get some of the guys, not a full qualification, but certainly a statement of attainment for some of the qualifications for some of the TLI qualifications. We believe things like hospitality, rail trackwork, on-train attendants, train drivers, guards, administration, driving trucks, driving excavators, building carpentry and painting and all those sorts of things - and I know speaking for myself and others of my vintage, we see ourselves as a conduit to pass on information to younger people. We operate in a men's shed environment where health and wellbeing flourishes and there is an opportunity to support other local projects.

On the negative side as far as a bike trial goes, there will be multiple users, some of which will be legal or illegal - bike riders, walkers with dogs, joggers, horse riders, illegal motorbikes. If the track were pulled up and it was turned into a bikeway, hazards would include a narrow

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formation; blind corners; loose, disturbed gravel surfaces; dog and horse faeces on the track where people have to walk and take their children; and rock slides and bushfire. Other users' safety would be affected by numerous communication blackspots; illegal motorbikes; dog, horse and human interactions; and limited emergency services.

Up in the north-east, particularly up around the Denison Gorge, if somebody were to get injured, there are some pretty tight places where it would be hard to get the emergency services such as ambulances to. You would probably have to rely on the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and other things.

Our group was invited to one of the Dorset meetings late last year and one of the things that the Dorset mayor said was that they would be seeking government funding to seal a bike trail wall. I can imagine the cost to do that is going to be in the many millions of dollars. That is about all I have to say, thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr BROOMHALL WITHDREW.

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Mr BRIAN KHAN AND Mr ROSS HARRIS, LAUNCESTON AND NORTH-EAST RAILWAY, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you Brian and Ross.

Mr KHAN - Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members of the Legislative Council. The North East Railway is the last remaining alternative access route to the north-east. At the moment, everything relies on road vehicles. If the railway asset is destroyed, it will cost millions to replace.

It is the tendency of modern people to think only of road-based transport. If economic viability of road transport shifts, because of fuel insecurity or global factors, we will have retained our viable alternative.

The Launceston City Council, after representation, has recognised the value of this corridor in its jurisdiction, which is very important. Former deputy prime minister the late honourable Lance Barnard AO also recognised it when the Whitlam government had Australian National Railways take over Tasmania Railways, the reason being it was a vital defence structure.

I refer to the Second World War alternative access. Branxholm, Legerwood, Derby and Herrick have lost their vital infrastructure, which has been detrimental to these towns and their economies. It is important to note that Ross is mentioned. The line returning a financial return all the time was the North East Railway. I am happy to answer any questions later.

Mr HARRIS - My name is Ross Harris. I am presently employed as a train guard with Sydney Trains. I was at Platform 16 at Central when Wendy rang me and asked if I could come over and I said, 'Yes'.

I want to talk quickly to my submission, which is mainly focused on the tunnel in terms of how critical it is to actually have the tunnel as a major product component of the rail segment. I have been in the past and am presently involved with rail preservation in Tasmania, being an active member, and have sat on some committees as well.

For heritage volunteer tourist railways to be successful, they have to be unique: the more unique they are, the more successful. The tunnel will make that point of difference because it is something no other rail organisation in Tasmania, and indeed Australia, has. There is only one other active instance in Australia at the moment where a tunnel is used for rail.

CHAIR - We did walk the tunnel this morning, part of it.

Mr HARRIS - Yes. I was a founding member of the Derwent Valley Railway Society and when that particular organisation had access to the Tasmanian main line, the trains were booked out. On our passenger feedback surveys, the one thing that happened all the time was that people loved the Rhyndaston Tunnel, which makes you think of *Harry Potter* or *Murder on the Orient Express*. It sparks that imagination, and it is an attractor. I feel that the present compromised solution has denied the rail segment a key point of difference.

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I also want to address quickly some comments in the Dorset Council submission and to correct those on the record if I may. In terms of railway societies and this constant confusion and misinformation about 'Everything is like the Abt Railway' or 'It has to be the same as TasRail', which is hauling 2000-tonne freight trains.

I did not have time to prepare to come over, but I know that certain people in this debate have produced telescopic images of the track on the north-east. I would like to present a telescopic image of the Yarra Valley Railway, which is the perfect model for this particular project. In this telescopic image, you are looking at their popular railcar that operates over a length of track that includes a tunnel. In fact, the tunnel is the key part of their marketing -

Ms RATTRAY - I think the photo has already gone around.

Mr HARRIS - I am not an expert in track maintenance; I will never be and I do not pretend to be. There you are. That is a fully accredited railway track operation carrying passengers along a track that is fully accredited for that particular use. It is not hauling 4000-tonne freight trains; it is not going at high speed - it is a classic example of what this organisation wants to do, and that is run a light-axle loading passenger rail vehicle along a section of track in the first instance. Therefore the track has to be suitable for that particular need.

An analogy I came up with in terms of all this business that somehow all tourist railways are the same and therefore they are going to cost the same amount of money and need the same investment is that it is like ABC Radio: ABC Radio as a multimillion-dollar network of railway stations that requires investment and so forth; however, you have small community radio stations that are quite often volunteer-based, with locally produced material in regional centres and towns, but it is all still radio. Could you honestly believe that you could compare ABC Radio and the budget it has to produce its output with the small community radio stations you have here in Launceston? It is still radio.

Lesson number one: do not think that all tourist railways are the same. I will leave it at that.

CHAIR - Are you happy for some questions now if there is no-one else to speak?

Mr ARMSTRONG - You were saying you are projecting a budget of \$150 000 for the first year: What sort of price are you looking to charge for going on the rail? Have you set a price you would be looking at charging to travel on the rail?

Ms McLENNAN - That was in the OnTrack report. It was covered in that.

Mr CABALZAR - We can carry 80 people a day, 40 in each carriage, and we projected \$100 a ticket for 60 kilometres - this is to Scottsdale - compared to Puffing Billy's 25 kilometres at \$80 a ticket.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is \$100 a day to Scottsdale and you carry 80 people.

CHAIR - Return?

Mr CABALZAR - Return, yes.

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Mr ARMSTRONG - How long would that trip take? What speed?

Mr MARTIN - You would probably do it about 35 kilometres per hour. Most of the track is 35 to 40 kilometres an hour. Given the condition of the line, I would say about 35 kilometres an hour. You would be looking at about a two-and-a-half-hour trip.

Mr ARMSTRONG - One way?

Mr PAYNE - Each way. With the opportunity to link with buses at the other end and then go through to the lavender farm and so on.

Mr MARTIN - That is where the real opportunity has come - with the packaging for tourist rail. All passengers don't have to go all the way either; that is not the product. It is using the railway as a conduit. They might go from when they get access to Launceston and from Launceston to Lilydale; some might go on to the Denison Gorge; and some might go on to Scottsdale if Scottsdale gets reopened to the full length.

Mr KHAN - Also, Chair, there are wonderful tourist assets along the line such as Clover Hill at Lebrina - they can go for lunch at Clover Hill. Also you have the added thing with Bridestowe Estate, with the record attendance at Bridestowe of 35 000 for January and 18 000 for December - 53 000 people over a two-month period.

Mr ARMSTRONG - They probably wouldn't all travel by train.

Mr KHAN - No, but the facility is there for them.

CHAIR - Another attraction. We have Mr Ravens coming in next.

Mr ARMSTRONG - You say you have 1000 active members?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, that's right, between the two organisations, Launceston and North East Railway and North East Residents and Farmers.

Mr ARMSTRONG - How many of those are really active in your organisation?

Ms McLENNAN - All of them and they are all chafing at the bit. We've got people who own farms with high hauler trucks and all that.

Mr ARMSTRONG - They're predominantly in this area, are they?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, Launceston and the north-east, and we've also got people from Sheffield prepared to come over and work with us.

Mr ARMSTRONG - So there are members in Sheffield too?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr MARTIN - It is across Tasmania. Ross is from Sydney, but Hobart prior to that.

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Mr DEAN - We talked about the farmers. We received information this morning, and I wonder if you can confirm it, that a number of the farmers are taking legal action. Has anybody heard anything about that?

Mr CABALZAR - Illegal or legal?

Mr DEAN - A legal court action in relation to turning it into a bike and walking track. Are you aware of any of that?

Mr CABALZAR - Plenty of them have voiced their opinions, but in the next sitting Mr Stuart Bryce will tell you all about that because that is the LNER people. I own 2 kilometres of the line at Coldwater Creek and I do pretty much all those meetings. There are 240 landowners, which he will tell you about, and there are only a couple who wouldn't mind pushbikes but the rest are vehemently against having pushbikes, horses and motorbikes and the rest on their properties. Many of them have mentioned they will get lawyers at the time, if we are not successful with a train and it remains a rail corridor, and that they are all prepared to get legal advice. We have a major slush fund and we will all be involved.

CHAIR - Do a class action?

Mr CABALZAR - Yes, a class action.

Mr DEAN - What discussions have you had with the Dorset Council and how have they gone? I realised I was going to open Pandora's box here, but I need to know what discussions are being held and where you are.

Ms McLENNAN - We made several attempts to present our case to the Dorset Council. It was happening over the time they were opening up the Blue Derby Mountain Bike Trails. They postponed our meetings with them. Then when they did go ahead and said they were going to allow us to do a presentation, I was excluded from speaking and I was the only resident from the Dorset area who was going to be doing the presentation. They had already formed an opinion. They were not prepared to listen and they were quite derogatory in the way they handled their interaction with us. I can pass it over to Chris because he was the main person, and Paul was there, too.

Mr DEAN - It is important. I want to know, and I guess the committee members want to know as well, what happened and why the council might not have listened to you.

Mr MARTIN - I think it is fairly clear the council had a fixed point of view on supporting the bike trail. They had invested a lot of their energy and time into promoting that as an opportunity for the region. I guess they were fairly closed to outsiders with another view who came in after they had set off on their path.

Mr DEAN - Have you been back to the new council?

Mr MARTIN - I think Wendy has been back a few times, haven't you, Wendy?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes. I am on the council. The Dorset Council did a lot of denigration of our group in the media. We were labelled as emotively biased and creating mischief and

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consistently ignoring that bike trails deliver significant economic benefit. They also said we were unable to accept and adapt to any change. We were accused of spoiling tactics, creating fear and vilifying the opponent, and expressing outrage and indignation that the bike trail was put forward without extensive public consultation. They said we were appealing to an emotional attachment to the past by playing the heritage card. We were accused of a fear of real change and letting go of the past. They said it is up to the community to accept, embrace and adapt to change. They said the past is the past and by all means we should celebrate it where appropriate, but we should not let our past to constrain our future.

That was in the media. That was in the *Examiner*, published by the Dorset Council.

Mr DEAN - My question then is: has the current council as it now is not changed its strong position on anything?

Ms McLENNAN - No. At the very first meeting I went to, my first meeting as a councillor on the new council, they moved a motion to accept the decision made by Peter Gutwein to do a three-quarter quarter division of the rail. I voted against it and so did Cr Powell.

Mr FARRELL - Following up on the sleeper issue: David, you mentioned that TasRail is not keen to give your group sleepers until you have some ownership of the line currently owned by the state Government and under the care of TasRail, which to me seems a very odd circumstance. Just following up, during the Estimates process we found that about 10 per cent, I think, of the sleepers had been promised to other preservation groups, so most of them, I believe, went to scrap. I see that probably the biggest issue for the group is the fact that the state Government currently owns the railway line and TasRail manages it, but they seem to want you to do all your dealing through a local government body.

Would it be a better process if you were dealing directly through the state Government and through the minister that owns it and TasRail,? Would that make more sense to people like yourselves than trying to do it through a local government body that actually doesn't -

Mr KHAN - It would shorten the line of communication.

Mr PAYNE - It would make it far better. Also, at one of our meetings we discussed the opportunity that maybe we asked whether it would be better if TasRail wanted to deal with ATHRA, the overarching body of all the tourist railways but they prefer to deal individually with the different tourist railways. We were told that if we were to get a lease to come back later because there are more sleepers to be pulled out of the track in the north of the state and it is probably going to be closer to our operation and that they had a policy, TasRail has a policy on how they dispose of surplus assets. I think one of those is that you have to have a use for it. You just cannot get something that you are not going to use because it is probably going to deprive some of the other societies of being able to use those assets.

Mr FARRELL - Has the opportunity been given to any of the groups or organisations to buy these sleepers at a scrap competitive price that you are aware of?

Mr PAYNE - I have asked if we can buy sleepers from TasRail at a scrap price but TasRail has a policy that all their scrap goes to OneSteel so we would have to go and talk to OneSteel about getting the price.

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Mr FARRELL - That is a policy within TasRail?

Mr PAYNE - I am not sure whether it is a policy. I believe that is how with the IIP funding they have appointed somebody to take all the surplus.

Mr FARRELL - Through our Estimates process recently - I cannot remember the exact figures - but something like 5000 sleepers had been promised to the preservation groups but the total scrapping - and Mr Dean may remember - was around 80 000 sleepers that had gone to disposal. How many sleepers would you need to get that line into a reasonable condition? Have you done the maths on that?

Mr MARTIN - I understand there is about 30 per cent currently of steel. There is 60 kilometres of 0.7 metre spacing, just ballpark, 70 000 sleepers all up. Sixty per cent of that would be a good number to throw back into the track.

It would be wonderful if TasRail recognised it as a community asset and put the sleepers back into the community at no cost.

Mr FARRELL - I just wondered because I think originally when TasRail was set up the disused lines were to be maintained by that organisation.

Mr HARRIS - The sleepers are already publicly funded, aren't they?

Mr MARTIN - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, I would like to explore the Government's compromise position if I may - and I do not mind who answers the question. On the 12 kilometre offer of rail, can you give me some idea of what the group believes would be, if you cannot get all the way to Scottsdale or Denison Gorge, the ultimate to make a viable heritage railway event, if you like. I am interested in exploring that a little bit more. Where does the group see that they could actually be viable. How long would the group be interested in seeking? Perhaps a five-year period? Saying, 'If we make a go of it within a five-year period, that shows the government and the community we are fair dinkum about this'? Can I have some indication of where you sit on that?

Mr MARTIN - The OnTrack report that Eamonn Seddon has prepared - Eamonn was the general manager for the West Coast Wilderness Railway, then the Puffing Billy Railway. Eamonn lives locally and provided a report to the L&NER committee. His view - and ours at the time - was that Lilydale through to Wyena is the key market. That is, if you are not actually getting into Launceston.

If you can get back into Launceston, then Launceston out to Lilydale and Wyena are the key markets.

Ms RATTRAY - Whereas Coldwater Creek isn't? It is neither here nor there.

Mr MARTIN - You are not going to park any cars at Coldwater Creek. It would have to be Turners Marsh.

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Mr CABALZAR - It is on my boundary. It is a set of track joints and there is no road or footpath or anything to Coldwater Creek. It is just a junction. You cannot get there. It is in the middle of nowhere. You can only get there on a train.

Ms McLENNAN - 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.

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.

That is why we need to keep the railway. Why pull up a railway that is already there? I do not understand it. We see that if we did take it through to Scottsdale, we would be helping the farmers and residents along the line as well. They are really happy to have a train come through.

One of the fellows who has horses said he would be absolutely fearful of anybody riding along that at any time of day and being able to come up and take a shot with their camera or having a motorbike rev along there while he is training his horses. The offer by the Dorset Council was that they were going to put up a fence. He said, 'What can I do about it?' They apparently went away and said they would put up a fence for him. He said, 'A fence is not going to stop interference with my horse when I am training it at 40 kilometres an hour and all of a sudden it gets a fright', and he said, 'I can see myself with a broken neck.'

I think that to take it through to Scottsdale would really enhance the north-east. We could work together with bike riders. We could pick them up in Launceston, take them through and they could join up with the existing trail put in from Scottsdale through to Billycock Hill.

Ms RATTRAY - What sort of a time frame would you be looking at holding the corridor management or a licence over that to achieve your ultimate goal? Five years is probably not going to be enough if you are looking at the Scottsdale Railway Station.

Ms McLENNAN - I am not sure. Chris can answer that as he knows all about putting in railways.

Mr MARTIN - As you can imagine, it is a voluntary organisation. There is significant business backing with some members you are hearing from. As volunteers it is very difficult to put a fixed timeline, a fixed cashflow, onto a project such as this. What I envisage for something like this is rail track riders out of Maydena on the Derwent Valley Railway. Something like that could be set up in Scottsdale, operating out of the station within a year.

Potentially that could link all the way back through to Nabowla or Wyena and ultimately the track would be upgraded back into Scottsdale to take occasional if not quite frequent full railcar or full train experiences.

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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.

There have been statements about maintenance if it were turned into a bike trail. There was a comment made that the line would be nuked so they would not have to maintain it; I thought that was an interesting comment.

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 Dennison Gorge and all these other areas, to bring them back to what they were -

Mr HARRIS - Maintenance of railway track of this particular nature is nothing unusual at all as far as the rail preservation scene is concerned, in Tasmania and nationally and internationally, with volunteer organisations such as Don and so forth that operate, look after and own various kilometres of track, with regular maintenance of track to the standard appropriate to the equipment being run on it. We emphasise the point that the track will be maintained to the standard of whatever the particular use is for. If we were wanting to operate 2000 trains on it, we would probably have a problem.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, I am not a train or track expert but the photo passed around of the Yarra Valley train did not look like it was on a five-star track.

Mr HARRIS - No, and that is great feedback for us. Again I am certainly not expert -

Ms RATTRAY - It went around here somewhere.

Mr HARRIS - That was absolutely the point I was trying to demonstrate. I think I have had success in trying to demonstrate the point, because it is that type of scene being conveyed to suggest sections of the North East line would not be suitable for the type of use of light axle load for single vehicle travelling at low speed. The infrastructure needs to be fit for purpose; the national regulator will come to us and say, 'To accredit you to operate safely and efficiently on this section of track, you need to have the track to the standard that marries with the equipment you are operating on it.'

Mr HARRIS - Regarding the picture with the Yarra Valley rail car, as a community organisation, they felt it was urgent they had something moving. They had to see passengers running on their track, so the track you see there is their first stage of reopening the line so they could get passengers operating. They are carrying 20 000 passengers just on Sundays.

Ms RATTRAY - The length of track?

Mr HARRIS - All up, they are going for 16 kilometres, but they have successfully secured government grants to rebuild 16 bridges. I have done design work for them on some and they are obtaining concrete railway sleepers and cascaded mainline rail. Victoria Rail has finished with

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the mainland rail track. It has worn out for what they want, but they are happy to hand it on to the preservation group, which is re-laying the track so they can take the large R Class steam locomotives at full speed of 60 or 80 kilometres per hour, the next stage for the Yarra Valley Railway.

Ms McLENNAN - The consultancy done by Railink was at commercial rates and the figures bandied around are that we have to find millions of dollars before we can ever get this track running. It has been a total misconception coming through, ever since the consultancy was done. That consultancy was followed by Chris Le Marshall, who refuted a lot of the figures quoted by the Railink report.

CHAIR - We have 15 minutes left, because we started 10 minutes late.

Mr ARMSTRONG - To clarify, when you were saying about the grass spraying, the gentleman will continue spraying the grass for you?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, the line.

Mr ARMSTRONG - If it is still owned by TasRail, which it would be, did you say it would still have to maintain the grass spraying?

Ms McLENNAN - I presume if they owned it, they would still do it.

Mr HARRIS - That would defy the act anyway.

Ms McLENNAN - The best way to do the line is to have him do it because he actually has a vehicle that goes along the line and sprays along the line.

Mr ARMSTRONG - He would maintain the spraying at their cost?

Ms McLENNAN - Absolutely.

Mr MARTIN - Something that hasn't been decided is exactly what the ownership model would be for handing it over to L&NER. Whether it is the Strategic Infrastructure Corridor Act, whether it remains as a government asset leased to L&NER - those decisions no-one has actually talked to us really about how this would be conveyed.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I noticed you have \$2.5 million in pledges and \$125 000 already spent on purchasing and transporting the DP14 railcar trailer. The other \$2.5 million, I would imagine is been done over a few years?

Ms McLENNAN - No, it is only been done in the last two years. It includes things like Lee Arnold providing 1000 tonnes of cartage for \$56 000.

Mr ARMSTRONG - There is a lot of in-kind?

Ms McLENNAN - Absolutely, yes.

Mr ARMSTRONG - The \$2.5 million is still relevant?

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Ms McLENNAN - Absolutely, yes, they are all still part of it. One of the big donors has been Portabella's -

Mr ARMSTRONG - This morning we met with another gentleman - and the committee will correct me if I am wrong - Wayne Venn. I don't know whether he is a member of your organisation?

Mr CABALZAR - Yes, he is.

Mr ARMSTRONG - He was talking about repairing the railway as you go through time, and repair to the stage where you would once again possibly carry logging trains or whatever it might be. Has that been discussed with your group or is Wayne assuming that?

Mr CABALZAR - No, I have put the money up for the carriages and everything, and we should have that in our mind as we repair the line. It should be fit for that, if it is needed in the future to do that. While I am on my feet, there is the bridge at Karoola - that only needs painting on the steelwork, the trusses are this deep and the deck needs to be replaced. I am looking at not using timber any more, but using concrete, as most of the bridges are done like this now. I sent a letter to Peter Gutwein, because the Government thing they did for 50 grand -

Ms McLENNAN - The viability report.

Mr CABALZAR - It is going to cost \$3 million to fix that bridge.

Mr DEAN - In fairness to Wayne, I think what Wayne said was the repairs would be done fit for purpose, but that sections or parts of it would also be suitable for industrial use.

Ms McLENNAN - Absolutely.

Mr DEAN - He did not say it would be repaired to that standard, but parts of it would be suitable for that purpose.

Mr PAYNE - If we were to run locomotive pulled trains, we would need it up to that standard. With the railcar you do not need it to that standard.

Mr ARMSTRONG - He was saying if you were repairing it, you would repair certain sections to that stage.

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Why you would repair some parts to that stage and not other parts?

Mr HARRIS - You make your tracks fit for purpose. The purpose is a railcar.

Mr CABALZAR - We have other carriages offered to us from Queensland that are 23 metres long that came off the Queensland line. They have put new ones on and there is nothing wrong with the old ones. They are ready to go. We envisage getting a bigger train to cart bigger things in the future. Because I have put the money up for all this at this stage, we should be

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looking at the long term and we should be able to cart bigger trains and more people. In the back of my mind we should be doing everything. That is the bridge there, you have the photo. There is a letter going around -

CHAIR - Are you happy to table those letters? It is probably the easiest if we table it.

Mr CABALZAR - Yes. I wrote to Peter Gutwein on 14 February - there are some of those there - and said I would pay for that bridge, supposedly \$3 million to fix, for the 90 metres from abutment to abutment myself. He asked me to nobble Wendy for the election and calm her down before the election. I said I would and he said, 'After the election I will give you the railway line'. Six weeks after, he didn't give us the railway line so I sent him another letter that said that I renege on the first letter. Certainly I can do the bridge; that is \$3 million-worth of yap, yap, yap - that is incorrect. It is not hard to do and we all know it. I have people who will assist me with that as well, big companies, at no charge. We can put a proper concrete deck on that bridge and that will cart anything you want over it, as it has done in the past.

Mr DEAN - I want to be perfectly clear on a question that Tania Rattray asked about the Government's current position and offer. Would you attempt to make a go of it if that stood? In other words, if you had the line from Turners Marsh, I think it starts there, through to just the other side of Lilydale Falls, could you make a go of it?

Ms McLENNAN - We could, but it would be very disappointing, Ivan, because we do not have anything to offer. There is no tunnel, there is no Denison Gorge, and it would be a non-event. I think that was half-intended, but that is just me being facetious.

Mr BROOMHALL - In fact, Ivan, that section of track is in the worst condition of any of it.

Mr DEAN - That is the worst part of it?

Mr BROOMHALL - It would take a lot more work than any of the other line. I have walked the lot of it.

Mr DEAN - If it went that way into Lilydale, I think Wayne was saying it goes to about the Lilydale Falls, where it would end, at the bridge there.

Mr BROOMHALL - You couldn't get anywhere important.

Mr DEAN - That is right and you would have to have a turnaround.

Mr BROOMHALL - Denison Gorge is beautiful. It used to be a park. Tasmanian Government Railways, back in the 1890s after opening the line, carted thousands of people in there for a picnic. There were 500, I think, on one day to have a picnic in the Denison Gorge from Launceston.

Mr MARTIN - Ross is quite correct - it is the worst part of the track. It is some of the straightest track from Lilydale back to the Launceston, hence the amount of money they spent on keeping that track up to scratch was not as much.

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Mr DEAN - A quick question on the tunnel. We were told previously - I think I have this right - that the tunnel is probably not safe for trains to move through because of bricks falling out of it and goodness knows what. Can you give some position on that?

Ms McLENNAN - Our structural engineer, Chris, will speak on that.

Mr MARTIN - Yes. Bob [inaudible] walked through it and as a rail infrastructure engineer he had no problems with it. I could not see any real problems with it, but if a brick does fall out, I would rather be in a train.

Mr FARRELL - Chris, you commented before about not knowing what the way forward is. The Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Act came out to rectify some issues around the ownership of the line retrospectively. To get a way forward, do you see that legislation as the best way or would you prefer to have a direct lease with the state Government under something like a TasRail ownership model as it used to be? Are there any issues you might have with the strategic infrastructure corridor bill?

Ms McLENNAN - I would like to have a direct lease with the government. I think that it would be important for the government to retain responsibility for the line. Everybody is ageing and they are not going to be around forever, but the government will be. To have an organisation having a responsibility for something like that does not really make sense. I think more responsibility for its assets needs to be taken by the government. I think this is a bigger picture. It is not just the North East line; it is a bigger picture of Tasmania and tourism heritage rail around Tasmania. This could be just such an icon for this state.

Mr FARRELL - Do you see that extra layer of bureaucracy through a local government body or a track manager as a hindrance to what you are actually -

Ms McLENNAN - Absolutely, because I do not think a local government really wants to take on the maintenance of something else. Local governments have enough trouble maintaining the assets they already have within their portfolios let alone managing a railway. I think, with the crossover between the Launceston City Council and the Dorset Council, there could be a problem there: who owns what and where do you go to and who is going to be doing that?

Mr FARRELL - Just to clarify the situation for Hansard: a section of the line is in the Launceston municipal area will be controlled by the Dorset Council under the current government proposal?

Ms McLENNAN - That is right, yes.

Mr CABALZAR - Which the Launceston City Council has objected to. If they are going to do anything, they want to go to Wyena, to the council boundary.

Ms RATTRAY - To the boundary?

Mr MARTIN - Yes, I believe Launceston council has indicated their preference is to have both rail and bike from Wyena, within their municipal boundary, back through to Lilydale. That is correct, I understand.

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There are several examples of where councils own rail infrastructure. Dunedin Scenic Rail is a very good example. I think Chris Griffin, who works locally, worked as their marketing manager at one stage in New Zealand.

That is the home of their rail trails. I happen to know the chairman of the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand reasonably well. When the Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Act was coming through, he outlined that New Zealand did not pull up any railway lines to put in bike paths. It was always corridors that had been railway lines. The track had gone many years beforehand. New Zealand seemed to get it right. They also have plenty of rail track rider-type experiences that are on the disused lines, and some of the disused lines are being reconditioned back to full service.

Mr FARRELL - On that, a few disused lines have been torn up in the state with no rails on them that are sitting up behind Kempton.

Mr HARRIS - Mole Creek would be a perfect rail trail.

Mr FARRELL - Why haven't these been used for that?

Mr MARTIN - I understand the land was sold off very rapidly because the farmers didn't want to have people accessing boundaries that hadn't been publicly accessed before.

Mr FARRELL - Right.

Mr KHAN - Wendy made a very important point about Scottsdale. Scottsdale does not have any major infrastructure such as hotels. Kendall's Hotel was under a tourism grant in 1962 and there has been little Airbnb. Wendy was trying to impress the importance to give Scottsdale a lift.

CHAIR - We understood that, thank you.

Mr DEAN - What is the use of the current bike and walking tracks? There is very little use of one track, we are told. It has grown up, we were told this morning by Mr Venn -

Ms McLENNAN - A camera was put on that rail trail from Scottsdale through to the Billy Cock Hill.

Mr DEAN - Which is a bike and walking track?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, it is what they call a rail trail because they took the rail up. The camera recorded 30 movements - and that would have been movements both ways - over a period of 10 days, which equates to three people a day, on average. It is just not getting the use. People living near the line never see anybody on it. My son-in-law lives on that rail trail and I go at all hours of the day to pick up the children, that sort of thing, and there is never anybody on it. I have never seen a rider on that trail.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What time of the year was the camera on it?

Ms McLENNAN - Around the busiest time on a long weekend in March - the Australia Day weekend.

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Mr ARMSTRONG - Australia Day weekend, January.

Ms McLENNAN - There wasn't anybody on it and it is not getting used. They actually have a couple of planned events.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Which one was that?

Ms McLENNAN - The planned events?

Mr ARMSTRONG - No, which bike track was this?

Ms McLENNAN - This is the one that they pulled up the railway between Scottsdale and -

Mr ARMSTRONG - What is it called?

Ms McLENNAN - It is called the Scottsdale-Tonganah Rail Trail.

Ms RATTRAY - My question is about the rail crossings. We haven't had a chance to touch on those. It is important to clarify the situation when we hear various figures put out into the community about the cost and what the standards are around rail crossings on roads.

Mr BROOMHALL - At \$20 000 per crossing. Also, in South Australia on the Victor Harbour line, the state government put crossings on there at its expense. They only had signs and the marking on the roads and they had run that train for years. We can build them exactly as they were for about \$20 000 a pop, not \$200.

Mr HARRIS - Again, the railway crossings will suit the need and the style of operation, whatever equipment you are running over the track. The crossing equipment - therefore the cost - has to match the style of operation that you are running.

Mr CABALZAR - There are quite a few crossings on the way to Hobart on the main line that haven't got any lights on them.

CHAIR - We very much appreciate you coming in and I am quite sure you would be willing to come back again should we have further questions after we have taken more evidence. It may be necessary because members here have lots of questions for you and unfortunately we only had an hour today.

We really appreciate you coming in. Thank you very much. You are welcome to stay.

Ms McLENNAN and Messrs KHAN, MARTIN, HARRIS, CABALZAR and PAYNE - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr ROBERT RAVENS, BRIDESTOWE ESTATE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome to this committee hearing. All evidence taken today is protected by parliamentary privilege, but I need to remind you that any comments you might make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. There is a copy of information for witnesses on the table in front of you if you are not aware of the process and if you would like to read it.

The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. By way of introduction, the procedure we follow is you make some comments and members ask some questions. We are seeking information specifically relating to the terms of reference.

Mr RAVENS - I am privileged to be here today and thank you very much for being prepared to listen to me. I am something of a unique specimen in this community. I am what is loosely called a mainlander, which is a terrible cross to bear. Twelve years now and I'm still an outsider. I do genuinely regard it as a privilege to be here today and I really regard it as a privilege to be part of the north-eastern community.

That hasn't come easily. The story is widely told - I bought Bridestowe Estate with my family over 12 years ago now. The deep suspicion that set in for a period was really quite bewildering, but we've obviously earned our stripes because we are now very welcome in the community and have a chance to move freely around from the highest to the lowest. It is a wonderful, wonderful privilege to have and I wish there were many more who could enjoy it.

In that association with the community, the people I get to talk to in a day are quite extraordinary. You will see in today's paper - and if you believe the press - we will greet about 85 000 visitors this year at Bridestowe Estate, which makes us, I think, after MONA, the largest privately owned tourism attraction in Tasmania. If we had MONA's money, we would be bigger than they are. It is one of those things you wish for. It is like a dog chasing a car. When it finally catches the car, what the hell does it do with it?

We are at a very interesting stage of evolution of the farm. There is much gossip around about things we might and might not do et cetera. As far as this committee is concerned, I want to make an upfront declaration: we have absolutely no vested interest in a bike trail or a heritage rail trail. My interest is only as a member of the community and as a ratepayer in that community through Bridestowe Estate to ensure the assets of that community are properly shepherded, superintended and managed. I put on record that I am a great believer in heritage. Heritage does sell. When my wife and I travel, and we travel freely, heritage is always high on our hit list. That does not mean because we see it that way, the rest of the world will, but it is very clear from the surveys we have done, from the people we have talked who visit the farm, that it is the heritage of northern Tasmania that brings them here. It is the heritage of Bridestowe Estate that brings them to the estate. It is the story. The story of 100 years and how an evolution has seen a great idea turn into a flourishing business.

Let us be very clear on the matter: that my primary engagement with this project, or the choice of project, is to ensure the heritage of that rail line is preserved.

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The Launceston City Council makes a great deal of the façade of Launceston. The late nineteenth century façade has been one of the big selling points of Launceston and northern Tasmania, but the rail line is a logical extension of the façade. The engineering marvels built up in that line all came together at the time the wealth of Launceston, or northern Tasmania, was substantial and the innovation shown in the history of Launceston is also encapsulated in the rail line itself. The bridges, the concrete in them, were all leading edge at the time and exemplify the innovation and determination that made Launceston probably Australia's most innovative city for the period. I do not want to see that lost. This is such an easy sell message, it makes me cross at times Launceston council itself has not picked up and run with it. That is Launceston, and I am in Dorset.

We have covered the issue of what brings tourists to Tasmania. It is experiential stuff; it is the search for roots, links to heritage and the stories that go with it. I can tell you from experience that it is really what has made Bridestowe Estate a powerhouse in terms of the attraction it is today. It is the stories we tell. Coming to Launceston by rail would make storytelling very easy and very simple.

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?

The family groups are usually uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, parents and children and they are not groups that are going to ride a bike trail. The middle-aged couples - middle age is not the right choice for me - are not about to use a bike trail. The big users of bikes are members of an interesting group commonly known as MAMILs. I do not know if anyone has heard the term MAMIL, middle-aged men in lycra. You make an acronym out of it.

Mr DEAN - I ride bikes all the time; I do not really like that.

Mr RAVENS - You are middle-aged, though.

Much has been made of the success of Derby, and arguably it is successful. Much has been made of a correlation between those who ride bikes for serious occupation thrills - and that is Derby - against those who ride bikes for pleasure. They do not correlate. There is not a single statistic that can link what happens at Derby with what might happen on a bike trail if it were created. 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.

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What we do know is that of our 85 000 visitors, a significant percentage has expressed an interest in experiencing heritage rail. That will not bring more passengers to Bridestowe Estate and is not our interest. Our interest is to make certain visitors who come to Bridestowe Estate have active dispersal through the northern community.

One of the fascinating observations that not only ourselves but the rest of the world has made is that Bridestowe Estate has become a destination in its own right and the passthrough is rapid. Fly into Launceston, come to Bridestowe Estate and with all the speed you can muster, go back to Launceston or somewhere on the east coast. Do not stop anywhere else because - that is not absolutely true, but you get the kind of thing. People are on limited time availabilities and do not stop anywhere, and the money they bring with them goes somewhere else; it does not report to the north-east.

I was on the Tourism Northern Tasmania Board for three years and in that time the board was seeking an overarching theme for northern Tasmania. To this day I do not believe they have found it. There is not one single rallying point that has made all the groups of northern Tasmania reporting to Tourism Northern Tasmania, not one unifying single has there been found. Heritage rail is the first and only smart idea I have seen in four years on the board and 12 years in Tasmania that has the potential to bring communities together and to take tourism to a different location within north-eastern Tasmania. There is the ability, properly managed, to use heritage rail to encourage and disperse real groups of tourists through north-eastern Tasmania.

One of the most neglected areas for tourism in Tasmania is north-eastern Tasmania. It gets very little sunshine. We receive considerable interest as a business, as does Barnbougle as a business, the penguins a bit, but there is not a lot bringing tourists to the north. It is beholden on the government of the day to recognise the shortcomings and to get behind this project, but is the next step. Let us decide how best to take the asset, enhance the asset and encourage tourism to take advantage of the asset.

I want to get on to some observations I have made about the economics of both options. I am on record as having endorsed the rail trail option, some four or five years ago now. I was prevailed upon by people I trusted, and I took their word that there was a statistical analysis and a business case that supported it.

When I finally had a chance to look at the way it was constructed, it was really a thought bubble supported by some imaginary statistics, and it was all about encouraging the federal government to put some money into the north-east. You can read a political message in that if you want, but the economics were frightful.

Having peeled back the layers and looked at the validity of the economic model put forward, I could not see how a community could possibly endorse it. Indeed, the community now, to its credit, has worked out fairly clearly that there is no case that would ever be economic for a bike trail in the north-east. It doesn't mean it can't and shouldn't go ahead. Communities and councils make decisions for all sorts of reasons, but if they are going to make a decision based on a rational economic assessment, it does not belong. Money should not be spent on a bike trail.

I have looked at the heritage rail option and the economics of that are positive. Whether it is able to be shown to be purely commercial or whether it is going to depend on the goodwill of the community, only a proper economic modelling will reveal.

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I have taken enough confidence from the conversations I have had, and I have made some basic commitments on the part of the business that I run, that we would get behind and endorse heritage rail because it can make economic sense. It can bring real people; it can disperse real people; it can encourage incremental spending; and it can provide an asset, a glue, which will bring the north-eastern communities together.

That is a pretty powerful position for a project to be in. It is a hell of a lot better than a whole lot of other projects that get up. Some, like the Trail of the Tin Dragon, are an absolute disaster because the modelling upfront is so poor. The assumptions are so far from reality that it was dead in the water before it was ever constructed. I suspect the bike trail falls into that class.

I am also confident, having already said I believe the economic model for the heritage rail is sustainable, that is going to take a hell of a lot of goodwill from a hell of a lot of good people. It is going to take a lot of support from a lot of businesses, but it has a case. It has a genuine case to justify investment.

It would be remarkable if the funds that have been earmarked for the bike trail could be reallocated to the heritage rail. That would see it fly in a way that would defy imagination.

I will tell you a story. When we bought Bridestowe Estate, we really didn't understand what we had bought. I bought it almost as a hobby; it was my retirement hobby -

Mr DEAN - A pretty good hobby.

Mr RAVENS - It is interesting because you have that terrible moment of reality. We own it, what are we going to do with it? Oh dear. We were very successful in obtaining a federal government grant. That grant - I forget the number and I should know it because it was the most important number in the last decade - was in the order of \$290 000.

We put a brilliant paper together and it sold the whole thing. The federal government came forward and said here is some money. It is unconstrained, more or less. Do what you will with it but make sure the project flies. The rest is history and we did.

We would have made it fly anyway, but it shortened the time horizon dramatically and it got us up and running at a speed that enabled us to capture the changing mood of the market. We were the first business in the north-east to recognise Asia as a new source of tourism. We were only able to realise and actualise that because of that grant. The money came in when we desperately needed it. We spent it mostly very wisely and the tourism response has been stunning.

The heritage rail will get up and run, I hope. If some of the funds earmarked for the bike trail can be reallocated that would guarantee its success. I have absolutely no doubts in my mind. Somewhere in between is the right balance. 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. You also have to have some funds that are soft funds in effect, that they can spend when they have that terrible moment when they go to do something and discover that the foundations are in a lot worse condition or bricks are about to fall out of the tunnel. You need to have a reserve. The current reserve is all about the community and that is big burden for a

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community to bear, but the community is switched on to it and I believe the community is behind it. If we could get our hands on some of the funds, that would make it a phenomenal project that I would commercially endorse if it were my money.

I think that is where we are currently at. How do we want to spend the money wisely? How do we want to give a deliverable outcome to a community in dire need of investment in tourism that is going to incrementally bring tourists to northern Tasmania? It is not going to be a bike trail. That will bring some, but it genuinely is not an answer. It is destruction of stakeholder value to take an asset, which is an extraordinary asset, to debase it and then to ask a community to continue to maintain it even though there is no way they can ever recoup a return on that investment. At least with heritage rail we can charge and we can reward a community by linking that heritage rail with a raft of businesses throughout the community.

CHAIR - Are you happy to take some questions now?

Mr RAVENS - I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr ARMSTRONG - We met with one of the gentlemen from the North East Rail committee this morning. We were out past your property along the road there, and the rail does not actually join up with your property.

Mr RAVENS - No, it does not. About 5 kilometres would be the closest rail point.

Mr ARMSTRONG - The way that gentleman was talking, your farm would be one of the icons for that rail to link up with.

Mr RAVENS - We would run a shuttle bus.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It would be shuttle buses and everything like that?

Mr RAVENS - By the way, we are so grossly dissatisfied with the support coming out of Launceston for getting commuters from Launceston without cars that we are looking at putting our own bus in from Launceston. I don't want to do it. That is not a big ticket item for us, but a big-risk item. That is not our business, but we would run a shuttle bus, yes.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That is what I wanted to touch on with the shuttle bus, whether you are quite prepared to run a shuttle bus?

Mr RAVENS - Utterly. I have gone public.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Do you think that would enhance your business?

Mr RAVENS - It is an extension of our business. It is our aim to engage with the community on the broadest base we can. I have offered the rail committee a railcar liveried Bridestowe Estate, something jaunty and purple. It is part of our commitment to that project in total, but it is also a mobile advertising hoarding for us. In a sense it extends our reach. It extends our ability to -

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Mr ARMSTRONG - I was curious how it would work. You would pick them up and then on the way back - what is the normal stay for people at your farm?

Mr RAVENS - About four hours.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That would work well.

Mr RAVENS - It works beautifully for us.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That is all. I was curious. Thank you.

Mr FARRELL - Robert, based on your business experience, and you stated that with heritage rail you can charge and recover costs and build it up, what benefits have you had explained to you about a bike rail trail as far as generating money for the region?

Mr RAVENS - I cannot see them working synergistically. I can make sense of putting a bike on a train and taking it to Scottsdale and putting a bike on the Billycock Hill run and then taking it back to Launceston. The hybrid model doesn't make any sense to me at all.

Mr FARRELL - What about a bike trail in isolation if the asset was removed?

Mr RAVENS - I think it is a cash drain on the community in perpetuity. The irony of this is amazing because you have Dorset Council, which has 7500 ratepayers, fudging numbers to make the recurrent maintenance costs look low. The recurrent maintenance costs cannot be less than \$200 000 a year and there is no potential whatsoever to generate revenue - none at all. The specious comments about putting some advertising up and people paying is nonsense. It makes no economic sense at all.

Mr FARRELL - It's been stated that the cycle track would create opportunities for accommodation businesses along the railway line for people to ride to.

Mr RAVENS - I can see there would be an occasional need for accommodation, as you say, but I think that need is more than satisfied by heritage rail, because the volume is just so much more significant. You can batch 40 people into Lilydale and you can make an impact. You can't do that with a bike trail.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks, Robert, for sharing your views around this. I know there certainly are many people right across Tasmania who acknowledge the work you do at Bridestowe. It is fantastic for our state and for our country, for that matter.

Just in regard to the working arrangements of having half a track in one municipality and then a bit more of a track in another municipality and no Launceston - with all due respect Launceston City Council hasn't had very much interest in bikes or trains -

Mr RAVENS - Neither. I've talked to the mayor on this on a couple of occasions. I cannot understand how Launceston can't be passionate about the heritage rail. It's a marvellous asset. It could easily enhance tourism in a very lean tourist area of Tasmania. I don't get that one at all. Why Dorset would be so generous in terms of maintaining the asset within the Launceston municipality defies my imagination.

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Ms RATTRAY - You see potentially some issues around trying to marry the two communities?

Mr RAVENS - Almost unmanageable given that the majority of the asset is really in Launceston. That is the bit I don't get. I just think it was an edifice complex to build something or to do something super grand pending an election. I just think we are wearing the consequences of very poor economic modelling and a very generous federal government that might have wanted to encourage a voter outcome in Bass.

Ms RATTRAY - When the strategic corridor legislation was put to the Houses of parliament some three years ago now, there was certainly some urgency around the funding. Do you know if that urgency for gaining that funding still remains?

Mr RAVENS - I have absolutely no idea. I still marvel that funding is on the table. I thought it should have gone off the table two years ago. Quite clearly the patient has been on life support.

Ms McLENNAN - I can actually answer that. As far as the funding goes it has been extended at this stage, I think, four times. I have been to Canberra to speak to the federal government about the funding and about the fact that this bike trail did not fit the funding criteria. I don't know how it managed to slip in to building a stronger region, because building stronger regions, it was funding for airports, airport parking, stadiums, sports stadiums, things that would create jobs and create a lot of economic viability for an area. I don't quite know how a bike trail actually slipped under the banner.

Apparently, it has been extended to 31 December 2019 and having run quite a lot of funding schemes, having been in charge of them and also applying through them, I don't know how it is happening.

Mr FARRELL - Just on that who is the current federal minister responsible for that funding?

Ms McLENNAN - Gosh, I don't know Craig McCormack?

Mr RAVENS - As tourism?

Ms McLENNAN - McCormack, as infrastructure minister.

Mr FARRELL - No, I wondered if there had been any discussions with the new member.

Ms RATTRAY - Robert, you also suggested that transferring funding from one project to another would certainly give - does transferring the existing funding attached to the bike trail to heritage rail fit within that parameter? Or would that be something that a very enthusiastic heritage rail group might have to lobby hard for before an upcoming election?

Mr RAVENS - The lobbying required would be stunning but it should be doable. I would hate to see that money lost to the region. That is not what all this is about. There is every reason in the world to believe that common sense should prevail and that funding, if it is still parked, is in a piggy bank somewhere so we ought to be able to redirect it with a commonsense approach.

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Really when you look at it, if the justification were about more activity in the north-east and we can demonstrate an even better use for the money, everybody should be jolly well pleased.

Mr DEAN - The question follows a little bit from Craig, and it was virtually answered there but when we were being briefed on this three years ago, and the urgency of getting it through, we were told at least two or three businesses would build up on that would-be walking and bike riding trail on the Scottsdale end. I think you are saying the economics do not stack up there?

Mr RAVENS - They do not. I do not know of a single business that could justify any kind of activity based on the sort of numbers of people who would come through. You might get a B&B in Lilydale but they are tiny bits of the big picture tourism thing, and I think we are comparing small picture and big picture. Heritage rail can be serious big picture stuff.

Ms McLENNAN - The Wragg family who own two businesses in Lilydale - they run the Bardenhagen Store and the takeaway - are fully supportive of the rail because they say they could see the potential of those numbers of passengers coming through Lilydale benefiting their businesses.

Mr DEAN - I think you were saying that you were misled some years ago when you gave support to -

Mr RAVENS - Yes, I wrote a letter endorsing the bike trail based upon the presentation that was made to me by some people I trusted.

Mr DEAN - I was going to ask you the question of who provided the information to you that caused you to want to endorse that?

CHAIR - Bear in mind it is being recorded.

Mr RAVENS - I understand that.

Mr DEAN - Madam Chair, if you wanted to release that in camera then the Chair -

Mr RAVENS - I would do it in camera but not outside.

I have to deal with the community, and I respect the people and their passion for something, but as I said, I respected them. Pressure was brought to bear and I responded because there was no alternative and then it took about 12 months before the heritage rail option came up. That forced me into looking at the economics of both cases and it was a revelation so it just shows you I should not have bought the Persian rug from -

Mr DEAN - It is very important for me to understand and to know that, so if Madam Chair would at the end of the process -

Mr RAVENS - Happy to share in private what I know if that helps, but it is -

Mr DEAN - I would like to know.

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CHAIR - At the end of the process, we could take an in camera statement if you are happy to do that.

Mr RAVENS - Happy to make a statement in camera.

Ms HOWLETT - Can you confirm for me how many rail passengers per day you expect into the area?

Mr RAVENS - Eighty.

Ms HOWLETT - Eighty?

Ms McLENNAN - There is a report there by OnTrack.

Ms HOWLETT - But it is around the 80?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr RAVEN - Jane, I think they are being conservative. It will have a huge seasonal variation and I think they are conservative. When things are romping in the north-east, they're busy and the demand is substantial. You would find it will taper off in the quieter months.

On average, 80 a day is very substantial if that is the kind of numbers we are talking about. It would be high in November, December, January and it would drop away.

Ms HOWLETT - Robert, you do not believe the hybrid model would work?

Mr RAVENS - It has not got a chance in hell. The only hybrid model that works is to put bikes on the train and take them to Scottsdale and let them ride the disused Billycock Hill route, because that is a testimony to stupidity, basically.

Ms HOWLETT - Wendy, have you tried to lobby any of the senators to transfer the funds?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, I have been to the federal senator for infrastructure to see if we could.

Ms HOWLETT - Any of the Tasmanian senators?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, we have. We have spoken to one in the north-east.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I ask who?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, Ross Hart. Because we are so desperate for money in the north-east to have the area developed, as far as tourism and that sort of thing, their concern is that if there is any lobbying and they push too hard, we are going to lose it. They seem to think it is desperate we need to have this \$1.47 million.

Ms HOWLETT - That money is there allocated to the Dorset area for the bike trail?

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Ms McLENNAN - Yes, specifically for that project. Under the grant guidelines they do not allow it to be transferred.

Mr ARMSTRONG - As a follow-up, how recently have you spoken to the senators?

Ms McLENNAN - I spoke to Steve Martin in the same party about three months ago. They are really closed off to it.

Ms HOWLETT - I would talk to all of them, actually.

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr RAVENS - If we had a reasonable hope we could get heritage rail running, we would be pushing like crazy to get those funds preserved and reallocated. Everyone, there is a federal election coming up so let's work it.

Ms McLENNAN - I have a figure here from Mr Farrell, by year 10 we would be making \$1.9 million, with the number of passengers we can carry.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Is that the number of passengers you can carry or the projected passengers?

Ms McLENNAN - No, the amount of economic value we will make.

Mr FARRELL - Robert, you have stated you have a pretty substantial tourism business in the north-east.

Mr RAVENS - Yes.

Mr FARRELL - I wondered why people in tourism organisations, whether it be Tourism Tasmania or the other tourism lobby groups, are not hearing the message people like yourself are saying in a state desperate for new tourism development. It seems there is something right in front of their faces.

Mr RAVENS - Again, I shoot from the hip and I am not about to at this moment in time, but I have my views and I did express those views. I had a meeting with the Treasurer on another matter and he asked me some direct questions. He asked whether I thought the tourism focus in the north-east was appropriate. My answer was 'No, it is the forgotten area of Tasmania.' We take the north-east absolutely for granted. It needs a lot of help and a lot of focus.

Mr FARRELL - Following from that comment, what do you feel the state Government should do now to improve the situation?

Mr RAVENS - One of the problems we have in the north-east is a lack of cohesiveness. We cannot even get wine trails together. I was the Australia Day Ambassador at Circular Head last week. I had not been there for a number of years and was stunned at the way there seems to be a coordination of tourism activities reviving the north-west. It was joyful to see it.

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Tasting trails and wine trails and a feeling of bustle and activity and that is lacking in the north-east. It is a problem with us, but it is also a problem with the way the north-east is positioned, the way Tourism Tasmania - and I am not having a shot at it - makes its decisions to spend as it sees fit, but the north-east is underfunded, under-focused, everything. If it were not for us and Barnbougle, the north-east would have virtually no tourism. That is not boasting; that is a reality. In spite of everything, we have had to become a destination in our own right. Part of our success has probably robbed Lilydale. It is because the rest of the north-east is not seen as rich tourism ground, and it is fabulous.

CHAIR - We have five minutes because we did start late.

Ms McLENNAN - I would like to comment on that. We need a proper destination marketing plan and backed by the state Government. The whole of Tasmania could do with it and it definitely needs to happen in the north-east, because we have major problems in the Derby area. A destination marketing plan includes consulting with all the residents, as well as all the businesses, and covers everything. It needs to be done on a very professional basis by a very professional company.

CHAIR - Any urgent questions from anyone? Are there any last comments? You are happy to have something taken in camera at the end of the hearings.

Mr RAVENS - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. If you would like to take a seat and we will hear from Mr Burns.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr COLLIN BURNS, CYCLING TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming today. All evidence taken at the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, but I remind you that any comments you make outside of the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. There is a copy of information for witnesses available if you haven't read it and are not aware of the process.

The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. We are seeking information specifically relating as well to the terms of reference. By way of introduction to the procedure we normally follow, you make some comments and then members will ask you some questions.

Mr BURNS - I can talk about bikes for days, so please interject.

CHAIR - Sorry, we are running late, but we will add that on at the end.

Mr BURNS - I'm the Executive Officer of Cycling Tasmania so I predominantly look after the road and track, so the Richie Portes and the Amy Cures of the world. Cycling Tas has 800 financial members, but we also represent a lot of other cyclists so our active members are predominantly those who race. I have some recreational members. TBUG is actually one of my clubs and they will be talking to you after myself.

I also have a loose arrangement with mountain biking. Mountain biking has just had a national sporting organisation come on board. Previously they did not, so they did not have a state body, so I work loosely with the mountain bikers as well. They have about 800 members. There is also Bicycle Network of Tasmania, so there are about 2000 registered members of the bike organisations. They are all insured so just a little bit of background on that.

Cycling Tasmania is all for participation. Our aim is to be the cycling-friendly state so I have been involved in a little bit of the advocacy. Some of the members probably received emails from me about three or four years ago about 'a metre matters' and the minimum passing legislation because I contacted every upper and lower House member. They were probably sick of me contacting them, but we did get legislation for 'a metre matters' because we want to be the cycling-friendly state. 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. It literally does. We obviously have the one from Scottsdale to Billycock, but it is 26 kilometres if we could add on - we were in support of the original proposal where it came into Launceston at Coldwater Creek but we support the compromise position. We think it is common sense.

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Personally, railways are redundant. It might be a nostalgic romanticism to get back on a train - and you think of Puffing Billy and the Don Railway, but the Don Railway it is 3 kilometres and it takes 30 minutes. Do you really seriously think people are going to spend three or four hours to go from Lilydale to Scottsdale? It is just not going to happen.

We look at sport now. Test Cricket has nearly died. It is BBL. People want fast action. Anecdotally you hear of the Asian tourists - they go to Bridestowe Estate. They put the GPS on. They go straight there, then they are off to the next adventure. It is just my personal thoughts on it. I do not think the heritage rail is viable. I have read the TasRail reports. They have said it is not commercially viable. When people talk about putting freight back on trains, that is just ludicrous. It is never going to happen. TasRail has costed it at \$100 million - seriously, why would you put freight on rail to the north-east on that railway when you can put it on the truck and it takes 45 minutes?

TasRail has also said a substantial investment in the line is required. There would be considerable investment in infrastructure if they tried to reopen that line. I have walked parts of that line. I think you guys went out there this morning, or was it yesterday, and looked at some of it. You walk around the tunnel or through the tunnel and those areas you are not supposed go to that people still go to and look the sleepers - they are rotten. There is a lot of infrastructure. You go across the crossings the rail.

So, personally I think, I hope, it gets up; I hope that they can achieve stage 1. There are 10 kilometres there to play with. I think it would be fantastic. Do not get me wrong - if they could get stage 1 and then get stage 2 to Coldwater Creek and then into the main line in town, it would be fantastic but life is a negotiation. I think it is a good compromise position. It gives the bikes some critical mass. It would be a 68-kilometre rail trail.

There is a website you can look it up. These rail trails are everywhere. I stopped and rode on part of the Kilkivan to Kingaroy one, an old redundant Queensland train line which was just there, rotting away. It is making those little communities vibrant. There are not thousands of people coming, but there is a steady flow of people and it is a totally different demographic.

I have had arguments with the heritage rail community and been told, 'You guys on your skinny tyres are not going to go on there. You have mountain bike trails.' Yes, but this is a totally different demographic. A couple from Oregon contacted me just prior to Christmas; they came up and had dinner at my place and said, 'We want ride on gravel', I said, 'What do you want to ride on the gravel for?' In America it is huge. They are scared to go on the roads so they ride gravel. This couple spent two months in Tasmania and documented virtually every gravel road in Tasmania. It is on their website. They rode up Jacobs Ladder, put a photo up and got a thousand likes in a day. This gravel cycling is big.

People come. They have their panniers. They ride; they are self-sufficient. They have their camping gear and go to the small towns. They look around and spend weeks. I worked with Tourism Northern Tasmania on the cycling strategy, and this was a pivotal thing. This was a done deal. We thought it was ticked off. I cannot believe we are still three years down the track and it still has not happened.

Hats off to Dorset. This is redundant infrastructure. We have not had a train there for over decade since 2004. This redundant infrastructure; they have found funding for it and they are

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going to create this fantastic participation off-road infrastructure. We can have running on there; we can have marathons. How good is Lilydale to Scottsdale marathon?

Look at the ABT Railway. It has never turned a profit. There is talk that \$50 million has been pumped into that. It is a tourism strategy. Yes, it is great - 38 000 people a year go on the ABT Railway. Even if you have another similar thing, you could argue it is going to cannibalise that.

It talked about the social licence. Some people are saying the community is all against it. Greg Howard came back in with a two-thirds majority. If you are talking about social licence, the best way is an election. Clearly, the ratepayers of Dorset are happy with it.

I have heard the arguments about maintaining the trail; well, it gets maintained now for free. Rotary groups, community groups, cycling groups, TBUG. There is not a lot of upkeep on a rail trail.

Railtrails.org.au: check it out. You will see they have all the rail trails all around Australia. People actually target these types of things. It could become a very good low impact tourism and recreational asset for the future.

It is all about active transport, participation and healthy families. Families want to go out. Derby has been transformed. Wherever I go in Australia - I am a national level official - people talk about Derby. They want to go to Derby. People come down. They are here for an event. Some come for the tour of Tasmania. They hire a car and check out Derby.

These types of things take days. People go to Derby and say, 'I have to come back for another week'; they say, 'I only saw half of it and rode half the trails and I want to ride the other half of the trails again', so Dorset adheres perfectly.

Bridget Archer is talking about George Town mountain bike trails. Down the East Coast they are doing the same sort of thing.

It is a crucial link. Tourism Northern Tasmania has said that. It is the tourism strategy. Tassie can become a cycling mecca. Our premier has said we can run boutique events. I brought the Oceania Road Championships to Tassie last year; we have a three-year deal and they will be here again in March.

Another little anecdote: my brother is a taxi driver. He picked up a couple from the airport. The wife is doing the Oceania time trials. They drove all the way to the Nile. He said, 'What are we doing?' She said she wanted to check out the course. They drove all the way to the Nile, came back and then picked up a hire car and are spending 10 days in Tassie. The only reason for that is that she is coming back for the time trial championships in March.

People are exploring the state. They are exploring it on bikes, and local communities, local people like families, want to get out and ride bikes. We want kids away from phones and the iPads, but parents do not really want them on the road.

We talk about mountain biking - the Enduro World Series is there. There are so many different demographics to mountain biking. There is cross country and downhill. They get out

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there with full face helmets on like motorbikes. That is what the Enduro stuff is. It is downhill as fast as they can. This is another demographic.

I have talked about gravel. I have talked a lot. There must be some questions.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What was the website?

Mr BURNS - It is railtrails.org.au. It lists all the rail trails around Australia, and the Billycock one is on there now.

Mr ARMSTRONG - You were saying families want safe places to ride. This one is 68 kilometres, did you say?

Mr BURNS - The Billycock one is 26 to 28 now.

Mr ARMSTRONG - The one in contention we are talking about now?

CHAIR - Sixty-eight.

Mr BURNS - With the compromise position, it is 40 to the rail trail.

Mr ARMSTRONG - For a family group of mum, dad and children, would that be a feasible ride for them, the 40 kilometres?

Mr BURNS - They might go and do five or they might do 10, take a picnic and come back to Lilydale. Next time they might go to Scottsdale and go back the other way. Your pannier-type cyclist will be part of it. They will ride all round Tasmania, but they will include the rail trails and it will be the drawcard to get them to Tasmania from a tourism perspective. Again, it is off-road infrastructure. There are no cars there and there are lovely gradients.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Down my way there are a lot of bike riders.

Mr BURNS - Whereabouts are you?

Mr ARMSTRONG - I am in the Huon Valley. I have had some say to me that they want a safe place to ride. I was interested in your comment. Thank you.

Mr BURNS - Tour to Cygnet.

Mr DEAN - You have talked about a number of issues. I am a bike rider. Scottsdale to Tonganah rail line walking and cycling track.

Mr BURNS - The North East Recreational Trail.

Mr DEAN - What is the use of that?

Mr BURNS - They had the Rail Trail Run and Ride a couple of months ago with over 100 competitors.

Mr DEAN - That is one event. What is the use of the track on a daily basis?

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Mr BURNS - I am not sure. I do not know if records are kept. The Dorset Council would have a better idea.

Mr DEAN - We were given evidence that on the Australia Day long weekend last year, they put a camera on the track over a 10-day period. There were 30 users of that facility over a 10-day period, over a long weekend period, a very busy long weekend period for Tasmania. That does not identify with great use of that facility, does it? Or would you question that?

Mr BURNS - If that is truthful, if that is factual, yes. I know groups go out there and ride, though.

Mr DEAN - I am not saying there will not be riders there if you have a special event. Of course, there will be, if you promote it properly.

Mr BURNS - It is not only the riding. There is also running.

Mr DEAN - I want to question a couple of other things you said. You said freight will not go back on a rail, and I am not sure whether you mean onto the rail.

Mr BURNS - On the north-east.

Mr DEAN - On the north-east. How do we know that? You have to look at it in a visionary way. We were told at one stage log transport would never go back on down the south to the north of the state because you could not load, off-load, on-load and so on. Logs are now back on the train down the south and coming north again.

Mr BURNS - I am obviously not an expert on trains.

Mr DEAN - No, but I am pointing these things to you. You made these statements.

Mr BURNS - That statement came from the TasRail report where they said the track was too windy for the rolling stock for freight. It would need substantial adjustments and they costed it at \$100 million to have it up to freight standard for the North-East line. I have only looked at the map and it is a very windy track.

Mr DEAN - You made another statement and I want to see what that was about. You said if they could stage it and get it back into Launceston - you are talking about the rail trail there. are you? The heritage train?

Mr BURNS - Yes. My understanding is stage 1 is Lilydale to Lalla. The second one is Lalla to Turners Marsh, and if the third stage is a success, the Government would give them access to the main line.

Mr DEAN - You told us rail is redundant. It is redundant infrastructure. It is no longer working. Now you are telling us it would be fantastic if they could stage the heritage rail gradually back into Launceston.

Mr BURNS - The main line is already looked after, so there is no maintenance on that.

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Mr DEAN - I am trying to follow your evidence, though, where you said heritage trains are redundant - it is not adding up, it is not working - yet you are telling me now it would be fantastic if they could stage it back into Launceston.

Mr BURNS - With respect, I said I am here to be positive, not negative. I am not an expert in trains. Heritage rail said they can do this. I wish them all the best of luck and it would be fantastic if it is a success, but I think the compromise position is a good, commonsense position.

Mr DEAN - I have a number of other questions, but maybe if you go to other members first.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks very much, Colin. I am interested in the usage of the trail. There has been some concern raised with me around unauthorised use, such as motorbikes. How do you see people riding their bike in a situation where they do not want to encounter any major obstacles? Can you walk me through how that works in other places, given your knowledge and understanding?

Mr BURNS - I don't think you can control antisocial youths on motorbikes. You can go up to the Silverdome, which is in the Launceston City Council area, and at any time you will see antisocial youths on unregistered minibikes. If you go to the back of Ravenswood, you will find them every day. That is a police issue, not an issue for us.

Ms RATTRAY - You don't think that concern is -

Mr BURNS - They're everywhere now.

Ms RATTRAY - You are not terribly concerned about that particularly?

Mr BURNS - No.

Ms RATTRAY - What about other vehicles, horses and that type of thing? Do you think it will be open slather for anybody being able to access a rail trail?

Mr BURNS - My understanding is that for pushbikes and pedestrians, it is a shared path. Horses I hadn't thought about; motorbikes you would think would be prohibited.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you know of any other experiences at other tracks where they have conflict with people using them that perhaps don't really fit the type of experience that a family might want to experience?

Mr BURNS - No, I don't. I haven't thought about that.

Mr FARRELL - Collin, you mentioned the Abt Railway, the money it costs to keep it running, and the fear that other rail operations may affect the viability of the Abt Railway, but there are also a number of different bike operations now. Does the same principle apply to that, or do you think it is a different thing?

Mr BURNS - Again, I have talked about the demographics of cycling. You have road bikes that go on the roads - Richie Porte rides a road bike. Amy Cure rides a track bike, so she rides in a velodrome environment. You have BMX riders and you have mountain bike riders. Mountain bikes have a different demographic, but then you have these touring-type, pannier-type people

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who will tour on bikes, so it will attract those, but also your families on your mountain bikes. Mountain biking is - I don't want to fearmonger, but it is relatively dangerous because if you run off the track you run into a tree and break your collarbone, your arm or your leg or something. Families are looking at an entry level where they just want to get active, get out there in the great outdoors and ride their bikes.

If you go to Hollybank any day, you will find people out there with bikes because it is a nice safe environment. You've got the full-on mountain bike trails, you have a little pump track where the kids ride around and it is safe because there are no cars. I look at it in a similar vein to that.

Mr FARRELL - Would the existing Billycock trail suffer because there would be another section from the other direction of Scottsdale?

Mr BURNS - I think it would actually vastly improve it because you would then have a critical mass of trails so people actually have a serious trail they can ride. It almost connects up Launceston with the east coast, through the Billycock.

Mr FARRELL - Where would you overnight, or would you ride the whole length in one day? Would that be the sort of thing?

Mr BURNS - Someone who is fit would; others will explore it. Look at Derby, there was nothing at Derby. I used to go there in a previous job and there was the old general store and the dying pub, and now it's a hub of excitement. You could buy a house there for \$40 000 and now they're \$250 000. Every house in town is an Airbnb or accommodation. It will spring up. I think it will reinvigorate the region. You will have the post office active again and vibrant, and little coffee shops will turn up.

Mr FARRELL - One won't rob from another?

Mr BURNS - Different demographic. Mountain biking is full-on in Derby.

Mr FARRELL - As far as the trails go, the Billycock trail won't rob from -

Mr BURNS - No, it will just add to it. It will complement it and be a continuation.

Mr DEAN - You mentioned healthy families. I support that; that is why I bike ride a lot. What about all the other people who need these experiences? Let us take the more mature people like myself, and there are probably not many around, the older person, grandmothers and grandfathers who are ageing: we have to cater for them as well. We were given evidence - I don't know if you were here previously - about Asian tourists coming to this state. There are many of them and they make up the larger percentage of tourists to this state. They don't come for the purposes of bike riding or walking. They come for the heritage experiences, the Bridestowe Estate experience, the Barnboughle experience and all these other experiences, and heritage trains.

Mr BURNS - Do you think they don't go to Freycinet and do all the walks? They are certainly on the trails when I go down there.

Mr DEAN - Some do shorter walks. There are short walks there. We are talking here about a greater distance of a walk and bike ride. That is the difference.

Mr BURNS - There is a lady that runs On Your Bike tours here in Launceston now and she has just quit her job. She is concentrating on that. She takes around people on bikes. If you have

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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.

I refute your argument about the age because I ride with the northern veterans and we have a guy who is 82 and he still races every week.

Mr DEAN - Some do, but I am talking about the average, I guess.

Mr BURNS - Let us keep our Tasmanians fitter and active longer.

Mr DEAN - The only other point you talked about and used as a reason was Greg Howard getting back into the position in the council. I don't think the council election was run on a single issue. I am not quite sure how big a matter this was in that area at the time of that election. I didn't see a lot on it but perhaps there was more than I thought.

Mr BURNS - Wendy McLennan ran on it. She was a single issue candidate.

Mr DEAN - She might dispute that.

Mr BURNS - I didn't see her arguing for much more.

Mr DEAN - She happens to be here currently.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Safety was raised earlier. You are not near a road in some of these places, so if somebody has an accident, how would they be treated or how would they be got to because an ambulance could not get to them? It was raised by one of the other groups.

Mr BURNS - 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. The rail trail meanders around, but you are never too far away from the road. It criss-crosses the road four or five times all the way through. That is the beauty of it when we talk about the Bridestowe Estate. Even if the rail went through, if were put back, how do they get to Bridestowe Estate? You have to get off, get on a bus or something. The bike riders can do exactly the same thing. They will visit Bridestowe Estate on their bikes.

CHAIR - Do you have any last comments you would like to make?

Mr BURNS - No. As I said on the news today, I wanted to focus on the positives. I wish them the best of luck with getting the rail trail up, but life is a negotiation and I think the Government has come up with a pretty good compromise position where both groups can do what they do.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in and giving your time to speak with us.

Mr BURNS - Thank you for your time.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr MALCOLM COWAN, Mr MALCOLM REED AND Ms MARIE SPENCER, TAMAR BICYCLE USERS GROUP, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome to this committee hearing..

Mr REED - Thank you to the committee for allowing Tamar Bicycle Users Group, or TBUG, to make a submission. My name is Malcolm Reed.

By way of background, the Tamar Bicycle Users Group has been around the region now for over 12 years. We have a membership and supporter list of around 550 people.

We aim to do two things. We aim to get more people on bikes, as distinct from Colin. We are about recreational cycling. We are about encouraging ordinary people to get on a bike and have the opportunities to do so.

Yes, we do run some longer rides but we run a lot of rides around off-road trails around Launceston and we do a lot of work in encouraging all sorts of people, not only Olympic athlete types, to get on a bike. All sorts and all ages.

For example, we have a number of people well over 70 who are riding. Probably two of them are in this room and I am just under 70. Yes, we are not everybody but, for example, Bike Week is coming up between 3 and 10 March, and we are organising a community ride where we will have a very short, easy ride for everybody to shake the cobwebs off, no matter what your level of fitness and get on a bike. That is us. We are about that. The rail trail fits perfectly with the sort of work we do.

The other thing we are involved with is advocacy, and that is why we are here. We work particularly with the City of Launceston at that level and with Bicycle Network at the state government level to try to promote facilities to make bike riding easier. Hence our interest in the North East Rail trail.

I would like to briefly introduce two people. The first is Malcolm Cowan. A lot of people may know or may have met him. He is a committee member. Malcolm is a very experienced person in business analysis and project management at a state government level.

Marie Spencer is our treasurer. She has come straight from Treasury to be our treasurer. She is a former Treasury official in Papua New Guinea and in New South Wales. She has had a lot to do with community development policies and budget management control, and she also worked with the New South Wales department of sport and recreation.

Linked to today's hearing, I have worked in voluntary-based organisations and campaigns in three different countries for over 40 years. I am quite well versed in some of the issues when trying to organise anything through a large voluntary organisation.

Included in that work, I moved to Bridport in 2004. I was secretary of the Dorset Tourism Board for three years. I was chair of Bridport Innovations when we built the walking track. We completed the circuit around the town.

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That was a difficult project. To come back to one of Tania's earlier questions, the charge often put to us by people in that community was, 'If you build this walking track near my house, not only will my house get burgled but you will have motor bikes and trail bikes going up there. You will have horses. You will have all sorts of vandalism and antisocial behaviour.' The simple answer is yes, there was a little bit at the beginning, but it died away because the community realises what an asset it has there, and more and more people are interested in it and look after it.

I was communications officer for Dorset Council when the Derby bike idea was first raised. Again, in response to some of the questions raised earlier: Is it going to work? How is this going to work? The fact is those were the very same questions people raised when we went up there to have those original meetings about Derby - 'Why are you wasting your money on this? It will never work?' The rest is history.

I was also a small business owner. I owned the Bridport Café and we played a very big role in linking with tourists and other sorts of people who came into the town. In those days when we first started out there was no actual tourist information centre as there is now.

In summary, I am fairly well versed in the pros and cons of the difficulties and benefits of voluntary campaigns. All organisations that rely on volunteers are faced with the issue of ageing and also it is difficult to get people - not always difficult, but people are faced with family issues that impact upon reliability. All volunteers must be properly licensed, trained and supported, which is very complex.

Last, I have travelled widely. I mentioned three countries before - the United Kingdom, Spain and Australia - and apart from those three countries, I have also ridden on rail trails in the United States, New Zealand and also widely in Australia. When I was there in Bright, Victoria last year, I spoke to a number of businesses and to people on the trail - all sorts of people who were, as I said earlier - non-athletic types are using that trail for short or long walks, including mums pushing prams and taking the kids out. I spoke to a group of schoolkids on the trail who were having a picnic by the side of the trail. I also spoke to pensioners and all sorts of people.

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.

I wouldn't like to suggest to the committee that this is going to be an economic miracle. It is a long-term project, but it does have a future. I guess that is where we differ from other people's points of view.

Mr COWAN - Just a little bit more of my background. I've worked in the private sector in business planning, and I've done business plans for a number of businesses and helped small business developments. A lot of my background has been in feasibility. In the agricultural industry I worked on the feasibility of new industries in agriculture and saw a lot of those. When you think about it an example in agriculture, just going on from what Malcolm said, you think of the amount of time it has taken to get the viticulture industry or the aquaculture industry up and running until they are now mature industries, but in the mean time we've seen a lot of others try to come and go.

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Just reiterating, the rail trail will not be a magic bullet. It will be a long, slow growth process, but in five years we will start seeing some real numbers. Those numbers have been estimated on sound business advice.

I have also worked in the heritage area, in heritage steam - I've worked at Pearn's Steam World as a volunteer and as a significance assessor. I have been trained in significance assessment, so I understand some of the issues about heritage and the maintenance and recognition of heritage. I also understand the costs involved with getting old equipment back into working order and the problems that can bring, and with working with volunteers, even in a small group like that.

My other credentials include bike touring. My wife and I have been riding our bikes around the world for about 11 years now and we've been through - counting up last night - 24 countries we've ridden our bikes in - as Colin was talking about - with paniers and tents and things. Out of those 24 countries, in 13 of those we've ridden on rail trails. The others have been places like Myanmar, India and some of the countries where they are still main lining their trains.

This is not something that has just been dreamed up as a local production, it is worldwide and I have actually experienced it.

We have made 10 points that we think are the strong points for the North-East Rail trail. It's based on proven examples worldwide. Again, it is not something that has just come out of the blue. We've seen these examples, particularly in Victoria, where we can transport the figures and we can use that as an example in the vision. We've seen it in Otago where they've gone through the same teething problems the rail trails have gone through here. We know there is a proven model around the world and even right on our doorstep.

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.

This has wide community support. Even when we were just testing the trail, 200 people came along not knowing what it was and rode it for the pure excitement of experiencing the rail trail. That was when it was first proposed in 2012 and rough as anything, but it still had that large number.

We have seen good support from local businesses. We have had letters of support from local businesses, including Bridestowe Lavender Farm, for the rail trail and we have seen a solid base of numbers gradually growing there. It is based on this future demand. We have seen cycling coming through the state and cyclists coming here in greater numbers. Launceston Airport now has infrastructure for cycling. It is becoming part of the norm of what cycling and tourism are about in Australia, and particularly in Tasmania.

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This rail trail will protect the corridor. It will actually maintain the corridor and the corridor is not going to go away. It is not going to be overgrown. If there is a case in the future where for some reason they want to build a railway, TasRail still has the right to take over the corridor again. This whole thing about the thing disappearing - it is still public land and TasRail still has the right and the heritage values will be protected. When you go to the rail trail tomorrow you will see how they are recognised and protected.

It is not dependent on a high level of volunteers for something like the section up to the Billycock. The Rotary Club of Scottsdale is doing a fantastic job in maintaining this and running it using a small volunteer base. They do not need people collecting tickets or driving anything or shutting gates or doing anything. There is free access on to the rail.

This is one of the strongest things: it provides local health infrastructure where people can get out and be active. Colin was talking about getting off the road and being safe. We know from the Social Health Atlas published May 2017 in the *Examiner* that we have a pretty appalling health status record, particularly in the north of Tasmania. We have to make people more active and anything we can do to provide further facilities for people to easily be active is something we need to do. Cycling and walking are the best and cheapest and easiest ways you can do this. We have seen this with the trails around Launceston, where off-road trails are being built and are gradually increasing. We are seeing the numbers of cyclists increasing on those trails each weekend because it is a case of 'build it and they will come'. The infrastructure will be there.

The other thing is this project has been independently assessed. It has been assessed through a competitive process with the original funding, so it met the criteria required of the project and it has been to Infrastructure Tasmania and Department of Treasury and Finance.

They say the market trends particularly increase tourism in Tasmania and the growing demand for cycling supports this proposal. The project has potential to deliver significant local and economic benefits, depending on the level of demand and investment by businesses, particularly local businesses. That is what the Treasury assessment has done.

Some of the economic benefits: I heard a previous witness talking about how we do not spend money. Marie and I, with six others, did a little ride up to Cradle Mountain before Christmas. We rode up to Sheffield, across to Cradle Mountain, down through Devonport and home, and the eight of us spent \$4000 in those five days riding on our bikes. The point is not the amount of money - it is where we spent it. In those days we stopped at eight cafes, four accommodation venues where we had meals, six general stores, one specialty bar, three museums and galleries, three bakeries and spent everywhere we could.

Mr DEAN - I thought it was supposed to be a fitness thing, Malcolm.

Mr COWAN - Well, we are still looking all right. It is like a steam train. You need fuel for their energy. We spread the love and we did not go past anywhere without spending a dollar. Instead of staying in one hub spending \$300 a night on a hotel and driving all the way to St Helens and spending a couple of hundred bucks in a venue there, cyclists will spread the money, dribble it out, all the way across. Everyone gets the benefit through the slow train.

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Mr REED - Businesses on the rail trails in Victoria, for example, were telling me people are constantly complaining they cannot get in because there are too many cyclists in the cafes. I presume they are in there not spending money, but there you go.

Mr COWAN - We are in a reciprocal accommodation group for touring cyclists and we have about 32 guests a year through our home here in Launceston. Launceston is now seen as a wonderful take-off point for cycle touring, and we have people coming here, knowing about the rail trail and saying, 'We want to get up there'. Those who do not know about it, once they have ridden it are amazed and blown away. We have had a German journalist writing about it and publishing articles in German magazines about the rail trail, encouraging people to come.

The rail trails are a bit like the internet. The benefits are only limited by your imagination. For example, think of those Blue Derby pods the Howell family have developed - specialised little pods. Nobody would have thought of that - they are picking up people from the airport, taking them up to Derby, giving them a ride and meals, all those sort of high-end, high-value spending being attracted by those things. The rail trail will bring that sort of expenditure, as well as slow-moving touring people.

Because of my interest in heritage, I thought, 'If we are going to have a tourism railway, what sort of things would you be looking for?' I found some research undertaken at James Cook University and published in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism* in January 2014. They found heritage railways need critical criteria for success. These include -

- Initiation and destination hubs with significant populations, authentic experience such as heritage rolling stock, so steam engines have to be something significant. It means you are not going to see it anywhere else and it is a unique experience. Old buildings, specific old buildings.
- Significant scenery to travel through for an interim start. In Kuranda in Queensland, there are wetlands and the rainforest, and in the Rockies in Canada there is magnificent scenery.
- Pioneering or unique technology such as, for example, the Abt Railway. It is worth coming to see the unique system of motivation there.
- Social importance - they have to be socially important. They have to have been a key to development of an area or a specific product was brought out of there or some sort of thing like that. They have to have a wider range of visitor attractions attached to them.

When we look at what is proposed for the north-east, you could genuinely tick only a couple of those criteria for a railway. That is coming from people who have spent some time researching these issues.

That is not to say there haven't been some iconic successes, such as Puffing Billy, which needs over half a million people a year, which is fantastic, but it has only started breaking even on an operational level. That is all in the Emerald Tourist Railway Board's report.

I have been collecting a few cuttings of those sorts of things. I noticed that one of your submissions is from someone who has been working on the Pichi Richi Railway in South

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Australia. Unfortunately, their society now struggles for volunteers and it would help if passenger numbers were to increase. It caters for about 10 000 passengers a year. They are running into costs, such as \$85 000 on replacing sleepers each year alone. It is a case of them running into those sorts of problems whereas we will not have those sorts of problems with a rail trail.

I have said enough. Time for questions.

Ms SPENCER - I will restrict my comments basically to my interest in people having the opportunity to participate in cycling and hence a healthier lifestyle.

So many people, especially women, whom I speak to say they would love to cycle, but they are afraid of the traffic and they don't want to get out there on the road. The rail trail provides a perfect opportunity for that sort of cycling.

I don't think it's correct to imagine that the types of bike riders are so compartmentalised because I ride a road bike on the road, a mountain bike off-road and I also have a touring bike. Just because you ride one doesn't mean that you never look at the other. I would be quite happy to ride a touring bike or a mountain bike on the rail trails.

A lot of people, especially people who are beginning in cycling, ride hybrids or mountain bikes; they are perfect for the rail trails and they are very safe.

For example, over the weekend at Festivale I was speaking to some people from South Australia who had come to Tasmania on the *Spirit* and they had their bikes with them. They brought them on the back of their cars but they would stop in a particular place - for example, Devonport or Deloraine - and go for rides all around the place and then come back. That is a different experience from the touring bike.

The rail trail, especially if it connects Scottsdale to the existing rail trail, could provide opportunities for people to provide accommodation in Scottsdale or in areas along the track where people could overnight or where coffee and food is provided. That is certainly how we have approached our bike touring: to stop frequently and use all of the businesses along the way.

Mr COWAN - In terms of distances, someone was asking before, when we are riding our bikes in Europe somewhere or Japan, we might do 80 kilometres a day.

Mr DEAN - Eighty kilometres. On Hokkaido Island, for instance?

Mr COWAN - Yes, that is right. Probably doing about 80 kilometres would be comfortable, but some days you might only do 30 or 40. You have the choice of distances you will ride and the speed you will ride at. It depends what is there along the way to stop and distract you - museums, wineries or anything else, all of those.

Mr REED - That is right. People will build their itineraries around what other services are on the side of the rail. It might only be 10 kilometres. I know plenty of people who ride only that. As I was saying earlier, speaking to people around the trails when I have made a real effort to speak to people, they may be only going to visit their mum up the road and they will walk with the pram on the rail trail. It's safer, it's nice, it's a great environment and it's part of developing the social connections of the community.

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Ms RATTRAY - I'm particularly interested, Malcolm, in the Launceston City Council's position, which has changed somewhat since the beginning of this process. You said in your contribution that you work closely with the Launceston City Council and yet it is not necessarily supporting TBUG's position at this time because they have asked for that extension to Wyena to be considered.

Mr REED - Yes, that's true, and Malcolm Cowan can give further information to this. To kick it off and to clarify what I meant by that, I am working with them on a range of issues, not just the North-East Rail trail. For example, we sit on the council's bike and pedestrian committee and through that we work with the council on a range of things such as developing off-road trails around Launceston and sponsoring Bike Week this year. They will be joint promoters of a number of events, including rides and public events that we are doing. We are working with them to produce what I think is a great asset, a bike map of Launceston, and things like that. We have a relationship with them in a much broader sense than the North-East Rail trail. Malcolm, do you want to add a bit to that? There is a bit more to that.

Ms RATTRAY - It's just a bit confusing to us.

Mr COWAN - I can see how it is. I think one of the things you need to understand is that we're talking about a continuous corridor. We're not talking about something that goes from one which is defined by local government boundaries. Whoever is managing the corridor will manage that whole corridor, not just the bit in their jurisdiction. Dorset, because of its experience with the bike infrastructure and things, has put up its hand to be the corridor manager. It has made the running with it, so it will be the corridor manager for the whole thing. We've discussed this in our bike committee. Launceston City Council has stood back and not taken a position. It has waited for the development applications and so on to come to them.

In September a motion was put, which was contested, to ask the Dorset Council to consider talking with the rail trail and the railway people about a shared path. There were no costings; it was just a request, no feasibility or anything attached to it. In fact, if anyone had read the Treasury report, they would have seen that the Treasury report has said this is totally unfeasible because it is going to cost \$50 million to do it. That is in the report.

We made a presentation to council last week, updating it and asking it to consider making a position on it. I note that the two proponents of that motion are no longer on the council so the council's position may change.

Ms RATTRAY - You think they might revisit that particular position?

Mr COWAN - I think they will. I sat in on the debate there and I think one of the comments the mayor made was, 'We don't really have a position'. That was only a request really, it wasn't a position.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you think, from your organisation, that Launceston City Council should have some involvement given - regardless of who is the corridor manager - it still has that responsibility for a significant amount of track?

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Mr COWAN - That is the point: it doesn't have any responsibility for the track. The track is the responsibility initially of TasRail, it is state government land, and that section happens to run through its municipality, and that has been its position. It is the government and Dorset Council that have been running the project and the process. I think once it gets a little bit closer, and it can understand the benefits of the proposal -

Ms RATTRAY - It might be happy to jump on board.

Mr COWAN - Yes.

Mr REED - Our position is somewhat different from Collin's, who spoke earlier. In an ideal world we would like to see the rail trail come right through to Launceston. We think it will maximise tourism and add economic benefits, and that Launceston will gain significantly as a regional hub if that rail trail goes from Launceston to Scottsdale. That is our ultimate position. We know that is not necessarily going to happen but that is what we would like to see in an ideal world.

Ms RATTRAY - The committee heard today that Coldwater Creek is not an access point at all. Is that something that you agree with?

Mr COWAN - From what? How? Why is it not an access point?

Ms RATTRAY - If the rail trail were the full extent and no heritage rail is, the access point from your position is still Coldwater Creek, which is what was proposed first up. Yet we heard that it was not an access point. I have not been to Coldwater Creek.

Mr COWAN - I can understand the confusion. I was talking to one of the councillors this week and he has spoken to the landholder whose land adjoins that and he is quite happy to negotiate access along that trail.

Ms RATTRAY - I think it would be fair to say there is more than one owner.

Mr COWAN - True. We have also heard that TasRail is something that will come out in due time. As in most things it might just be a question of money; because it is a live rail, TasRail obviously would want it fenced and all those sort of issues, but I understand the space is there and we already have access up to with the old rail line up to Rocherlea. There is access through to the trail which goes onto the Archer's property.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr Archer has given consent for access?

Mr COWAN - No, I did not say that. He has had discussions and the impressions are there might be, but that is -

Mr REED - The discussions were informal, Tania. We would not like to put on the record that he has agreed to anything, but it is our understanding those informal discussions have taken place.

Ms RATTRAY - That is good. Last time I spoke to him, nobody had discussed anything with him so that is good. There has been some discussion.

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Mr COWAN - We are concentrating on getting it done to Lilydale and time to make those negotiations.

Ms RATTRAY - It was indicated that the funding is there but my understanding is that is part funding. There still would be a requirement for Dorset Council as a corridor manager to come up with additional funds, or is your understanding that \$1.47 million does the lot for a rail track?

Mr COWAN - That has never been the - that was matching funding and Dorset is constantly confirming with us that it will need to match its share.

Ms RATTRAY - Match the \$1.47 million?

Mr COWAN - Yes.

Mr REED - That is an issue for them, I would argue.

Ms RATTRAY - I am just interested in where - you just said the funding was there and I just wanted to clarify it is not the complete funding for the entire project as you understand it. It needs -

Mr REED - Matching funding. Dorset has indicated that it would match it.

Ms RATTRAY - It will come up with it?

Mr REED - It will come up with it and will not have a problem with it.

Mr COWAN - Someone was asking about access and the risk from motorbikes and that sort of thing?

Ms RATTRAY - I asked whether that was a concern and who would be given access to the rail trail?

Mr COWAN - It is relatively free access for bikes and runners and maybe horses in some areas, but I think what we have seen on the Billycock section - and I guess we can thank those trail riders from up there because they used to charge up and down that section and kept access open to it.

Ms RATTRAY - I think they still do. My understanding.

Mr COWAN - What they are telling us is that it is not a problem there anymore. You have to look at it from the motorbike rider's perspective as well. Do they really want to come down a trail at 40 kilometres per hour and be confronted by a cyclist coming the other way? It takes the fun out of it a bit.

Mr REED - As I said earlier, the same arguments was put up about the Bridport walking track and that is not a problem either.

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Ms RATTRAY - I guess that is closer to the built-up area than perhaps Tonganah to the Billycock but I take your point.

Mr REED - The same arguments were raised.

Ms SPENCER - I have seen motorbikes around that Tonganah, just that very small area there.

Ms RATTRAY - They get on and off at the top of the Tonganah and at the Rocky Gully as well. I am not on the trail; I am in my car. That is where they are getting on and off.

Mr COWAN - There was another point about the safety aspect. When you look at the rail trails around Victoria, there are marker points, GPS points and so on. If any safety issues arise, people have mobile phones - there is mobile phone coverage there and there are always access points from the road. It is not quite as bad as walking in the south-west.

Ms RATTRAY - There is no mobile phone service up Rocky Gully.

Mr COWAN - No, not at the moment.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I read in your submission that an Otago rail trail, 150 kilometres long, contributed \$12.28 million to the Otago economy - 150 kilometres and this one is 68: Is there an ideal length? Is it the longer the trail the better?

Mr COWAN - The longer, the better.

Mr REED - Some research suggests that. To tick that answer off in terms of anecdotal observations I think the answer is 'it depends'. Where the trails have been well established over 10 years around Bright, for example, all sorts of businesses are built up along the side, which means some rides are quite productive economically. There are three vineyards within 10 kilometres and there is a café so you get an economic return out of that area. You would not necessarily get an economic return at the same level out of every 20 kilometres, if you see what I mean. You cannot make that simple arithmetical connection but overall I think the economic benefit is long term and clear.

Mr COWAN - In America at the moment there is a project to connect up all the rail trails to give that connectivity so you can ride across America on rail trails.

Mr ARMSTRONG - All these other rail trails throughout Australia and New Zealand and the management and maintenance of those: we are talking about a corridor manager for our trails and how are they managed. Do you know? You might not be able to answer that. What sort of management?

Mr COWAN - For instance, the Bright one is managed by a small management committee. The Otago one is a trust. They collect levies from businesses that benefit out of the trail.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Are there any costs to the people who use it?

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Mr COWAN - No. They have volunteer donation boxes. That trust is running quite well on sponsorship. They have sponsored signs. It is not \$200 000 a year to maintain a 50-kilometre trail. All you are doing is basically maintaining the surface, which is a beautiful compacted surface, and keeping the weeds and material off it. That is how they are funded. They have sponsorship. Like every other volunteer group, they will go for funding grants and so on.

Mr REED - I think the important point here is that the models may vary but the maintenance is eminently doable. These are not big maintenance jobs despite what people say. Again, if I might refer to the Bridport walking track. That was another argument used. How would we maintain it? We did it through a combination of working with council. For five years Bridport Innovations managed the maintenance and we did it through volunteers. We had a model. My understanding is that in Bright and the Southern Goldfields, there is some local government support but there are also volunteers. It is a very manageable task. I do not think we should exaggerate the difficulty involved here. It is not like climbing Mount Everest. It can be done, and it is doable and relatively low key.

Mr DEAN - I will start on that point. Isn't that a similar situation, if it were a heritage rail, the maintenance problem? We have been given a lot of evidence of the volunteer groups involved here. I accept what you are saying about volunteers' ages and things like that. Things keep changing all the time. Now we have rail with metal rails and sleepers and so on, these tracks are pretty easy to maintain. We are talking about a heritage rail that will have about a seven-tonne load limit on it. It is very light. Can't the same be said for the similar maintenance of the track?

Mr REED - I'm not an expert on rail trail maintenance, but I would think the answer would be no. I just think it is common sense that what you've just described would take more maintenance than a rail trail or a walking track. That would be one thing. Coming back to your point about volunteers, I think that's true. I think volunteer groups can still play a significant role, but I might add, as I alluded to at the beginning, that it is difficult to maintain committed volunteers even for projects such as this.

I am also involved in the Trevallyn Reserve maintenance group and in some weeks we get 20, some weeks we get three, and other weeks we have to cancel our working bees because of that arrangement. Yes, volunteers can still play a significant role, but the point is that they are ageing and it is difficult to maintain volunteer crews. The bigger the project you set out to achieve, the more difficult it is. The heritage rail proposal is a significant project in that area. That is what I am alluding to.

As I said, I don't think it stands to reason that the two levels of maintenance are the same, but I am not an expert; I acknowledge that.

Mr DEAN - I don't want to go down that path; I don't want to get into arguments with you that it is not good. In your submission you make the comment in the penultimate paragraph -

In conclusion, TBUG trusts that this inquiry takes account of the many anomalies and unsubstantiated claims put forward by the rail proponents, which have been exposed in the Infrastructure Tasmania report.

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There was also another report done that exposes the Tasmanian Government report, wasn't there? Wasn't there a second consultant's report done in relation to this whole thing? Have you seen that one?

Mr COWAN - I've seen the Infrastructure report, I've seen the Treasury report -

Mr DEAN - Another consultancy report was done which I think had significant differences in a lot of the issues and statements than the one done by the government. I think the government report cost \$50 000 or \$60 000 or whatever it was, and I think the other one cost far less than consultant's report, about \$7000 or something. Should the committee not also take note of that report?

Mr REED - We don't know the report and we can't comment on that.

Mr DEAN - You haven't seen it at all?

Mr COWAN - No.

Mr DEAN - No. It might be something you should look at.

Mr COWAN - Is that the Railink one or the one done by the rail group?

Mr DEAN - Yes, it was a report they commissioned.

Mr COWAN - Yes, we've seen that.

Mr DEAN - There are significant differences in that, aren't there, compared with the other one?

Mr COWAN - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Should we take notice of that report?

Mr COWAN - I think you should take notice of all the reports.

Mr DEAN - In your submission, you simply say we should take notice -

Mr COWAN - You look at everything, Ivan, please.

Mr DEAN - You were just drawing attention to that one report because it supports the rail trail.

Mr COWAN - I think the Treasury one tries to bring the whole thing together, and it is supposedly independent; I presume it is.

Mr DEAN - You also talked about the destination hubs and so on, and you referred to the needs to have certain strategic points on these lines for them to be successful. I think you were talking about heritage rail when you made that statement. If we look at the line, you have, for instance, the tunnel, which is a very interesting aspect of that line I would say, and that is an

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attraction to rail persons, rail users. You have Denison Gorge and Bridestowe Estate, and you have wineries and all those other things that really are of significant interest to travellers, tourists and so on. Don't you think that line, if it went right through, would have that similar attraction? Those points that you've already talked about - I think Malcolm Cowan raised it?

Mr COWAN - If you go -

Mr DEAN - There's nothing between Coldwater Creek and Lilydale; there is very little between there, the strength that the Government have given it.

Mr COWAN - Just imagine you're in the train, sitting in the train and suddenly it all goes dark and 30 seconds later it all goes light again and you've been through the tunnel. You think, 'Well, wasn't that a heritage experience?' What do you mean - to experience it, you would have to stop the train and get out and see it? On a bicycle you ride up to a tunnel, you see the cuttings. You appreciate the way they were dug by hand. You see the brickwork around the entrance. You see the brickwork and the architectural and engineering achievements through the tunnel and -

Mr DEAN - Malcolm, trains can stop. They have brakes. They stop and show the tourists these things. They would stop at the beginning of that tunnel.

Mr COWAN - They would stop there and all get out.

Mr DEAN - That is exactly what happens. I have been on them. That is what they do - stop at these tourist attractions, and people get out, look, view it, get back in, they go.

Mr COWAN - We are not in the business - we are not going to tell the rail people what they should be doing with the train.

Mr DEAN - No, but I am saying: aren't those same attractions available to people on the train? That is what I am saying.

Mr COWAN - Yes, they should be.

Mr REED - I would say too, the point in what Malcom was saying - and he might want to discuss this a bit further - is there were 10 criteria that research showed made for successful heritage railways. One of them was scenic tourist railways to which you referred. We were thinking: did this project meet many of those 10 criteria? Sure, there is some reasonably scenic scenery but we did not think it met the other factors, including a long history of heritage that the railways could relate to, having been close to big hubs of population, and having a connection with that community that goes back a long and extended time that would be an experience for the tourists. That was the point.

Mr COWAN - The research shows that.

Mr REED - You are right, the scenery is not bad, but would it compete with other really successful heritage railways? Again, we are not experts on that field but we are not sure.

Mr COWAN - Let me just quote from some research we happened to come across, and that was what I can give you the references and go and have a look.

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Mr REED - Puffing Billy, for example, is close to Melbourne with a hub of 4 million people on its doorstep.

Mr DEAN - I have been on that a number of times. It is not a very exciting ride, I can tell you.

Mr REED - Fair enough. Twenty-three kilometres.

Ms SPENCER - We want to promote activity from people. We are thinking of long-term savings to the health budget, for example, if people were fitter. The reduction in size of people if they did more exercise. This sort of thing.

Mr DEAN - But there is more than that, too.

Ms SPENCER - Those are just factors.

Mr DEAN - The north-east is calling out for assistance and support, and I think that is clear. Here we would have a destination hub - that would be Scottsdale if the rail trail were supported right though. There would be that destination hub -

Mr REED - You mean the rail trail or do you mean the bike?

Mr DEAN - No, sorry, I mean the heritage train.

Mr REED - That applies to the trail as well. It equally applies to the trail. In essence, Ivan, the point we are trying to make is that throughout the world there are many living, breathing examples of rail trails that work and that have brought enormous economic benefit. We are not sure, we are not the experts, and we think the evidence points us to agreeing, but we are not sure the train can work in any way in the long term to do that. If you look at the evidence, we think the points you just raised about a hub providing economic benefits would be more likely realised through the rail trail project.

Mr DEAN - We know the Abt went through difficulties and so on. It is now, as I understand it, returning a profit.

Mr COWAN - No, it is not, Ivan.

Mr DEAN - I understand it is.

Mr COWAN - Maybe a profit after the \$180 000 for state support.

Mr REED - There is a lot of state support that we are not -

Mr DEAN - I understand it is. It has turned around. There are some changes in that -

Mr REED - But, Ivan, you see again the Abt Railway has that history. It is a railway based on a 100-year mining history. It has significant scenery. It has significant heritage. What I understand, and I can stand to be corrected on this, is that the carriage bought so far for the

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heritage rail proposal is nothing to do with the heritage of the north-east. It is just a railway carriage they were able to get their hands on. It does not have that connection. It does not have that narrative, to use a communications turn. It does not have that story, and so what we are saying to you is that it does not meet the criteria the research might suggest it needed. That is all we are saying. Some of them, yes, it does.

The rail trail, based on the evidence from around the world, will provide serious health, social and economic benefits in the long term, like Derby.

Mr DEAN - We talked about the Tonganah Billycock track which has been raised a number of times. You may have been here when I asked Colin a question about the use of that track. Some evidence has been given to us -

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CHAIR - We have Mr Cabalzar back, who would like to make some comments.

Mr CABALZAR - Unfortunately David Payne has left. The bike people talk in the paper all the time about how it is too winding to get freight down there. That man was the last man who drove the train from Scottsdale to Launceston every day for the last 12 months of the trip with 1000 tonnes of logs on it - every day for a year with no derailments. They talk about derailments, a twisted track and all that. There is talk about some of the bends; they had timber sleepers on them and they need to replace them with steel to stop the push with the train with 1000 tonnes on it.

As I said earlier, my push is to get that line back so it can cart freight because I think in the long term of history, with log trucks on the roads and the cost of fixing the roads, the government is not going to have the money, and our freight is going to be coming out of there on a train again in the long term. I think we should seriously be looking at doing the rail to the axle loads to suit freight, like it did. It is not hard to do. The line is there, the sleepers are there and it is simple to fix it. Plus the fact with that other little photo, it is a wider track and it is perfect, as you saw today. Those lines are beautiful and straight and it will be a lovely ride compared to, I heard you say, Puffing Billy.

That is all I wanted to say. That man, unfortunately, has gone, and I could have got him to say to you, 'I am the man that drove the train for the last year'. It is super important, it really is.

Mr FARRELL - The corners would not be as sharp as the Sidling corners.

Mr CABALZAR - No. You just needed to know that. It is not correct.

CHAIR - Thank you, Paul. We really appreciate your making the point.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.