

## **PUBLIC**

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSIONAL COMMITTEE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B' MET IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2019.**

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### **NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR**

**Mr CHRIS GRIFFIN**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TOURISM NORTHERN TASMANIA INCORPORATED, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Ms Armitage) - We are taking sworn evidence and anything you say in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, but we need to remind you that anything you say outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. There is a copy of the information for witnesses if you have not read it.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I have that.

**CHAIR** - The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available.

If you would like to make a short statement or give a preamble, then members will ask you some questions.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I have to admit I have provided you quite a lengthy submission and I apologise for that.

I want to reference the opening couple of pages in a very summary way. I am here representing Tourism Northern Tasmania Incorporated. I am the Chief Executive Officer of that agency. We are a regional tourism organisation and not-for-profit by definition, but we have a responsibility towards generating improved social and economic returns to the community from the visitor economy and being respectful of the environment. Some of the work we do is in and around identifying opportunities for enabling infrastructure and advocating for that infrastructure to predicate investment and job generation across visitation and the return that it provides to communities around the northern municipality.

With the issue in front of us today, as early as late 2013 we investigated, with Northern Tasmania Development, the economic development agency then for the region, the idea of exploring the rail corridor as a rail trail. It was, as we understood from our assessment at that time with council and with members of the tourism industry particularly, the only proposal on the table. We had not identified or had seen any support for a rail enterprise. Anecdotal feedback from TasRail at the time was that they had absolutely no interest in the corridor. I think they then, in consequent years, affirmed that.

An economic feasibility study was undertaken on transferring that corridor to a rail trail, well before land transfer and management issues were presented in 2016. As that process went through - and you are all very familiar with that matter and the federal funding that was secured and the development plan, et cetera - it was around 2016 when the issue was in front of the

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE - NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON (GRIFFIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

Legislative Council or lower House with regard to land management, transfers and change of policy on that matter that the idea of a railway was mooted.

From our perspective, since then till now we have been seeking a business case for how a railway would work. That has not really eventuated in any singular way. There were a lot of proposals, ideas and concept papers thrown around but we didn't end up getting what we needed, which was to say: how much is it going to cost? What is the return to the community, over what time frame and - materially, from our perspective, rather selfishly - how would that impact the visitor economy?

By the time 2018 came around when the Treasury report came out, which I am sure you are also very familiar with, that assessed all the respective claims, that then cascaded through to the Treasurer's recommendation for a dual use. I have to admit my first reaction to the dual-use proposal was a bit bemused. I spent some time in August and September seeking to meet with both the rail group and the recreational trail group together, to find some type of accord so we could find a solution. At that time, the general feeling I had from the community in the north-east is they were absolutely fed up with this debate. It was divisive, it had become quite toxic, and it was getting to a point where, in terms of its investment, it was exceeding any returns that it was going to generate. There was some real animosity.

Not long after that, this process was announced. Where I am sitting here today, I ponder on my background having worked in railways before in New Zealand, on the Taieri Gorge Railway and Tranz Rail for cumulatively six years; the following six years I worked in wholesale travel selling rail tours from Australia in New Zealand and also as the general manager of marketing for Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism, where we were selling the Tranzalpine, trans-coastal and Weka Pass railways to the world. About 12 years of accumulative experience of my 23 years has been having something to do with rail design and rail promotion.

It was on the back of that and pondering where we had ended up in the north-east and thinking about this dual-use opportunity that I guess the genesis of the submissions come from, and a concept we would call a 'rail and ride' experience. I have referenced the Dunedin, New Zealand, example, which was the Taieri Gorge Railway - Otago Central Rail Trail product that has a lot of similarities to the situation we are dealing with but the scale is a little different in terms of duration and distances. However, the opportunity has proven rather clearly that a railway and a rail trail can work harmoniously on the basis of good will and co-promotion.

Essentially, I want to be able to illustrate the basis of the submission that we brought forward.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - What was that? A rail trail and -

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

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

## **PUBLIC**

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

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

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

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you for clarifying that. You talk about needing an origin and a destination. Would you agree that coming from Launceston to Lilydale is missing out on a couple of those key parts of the rail track, which is the tunnel and the Denison Gorge? Would that not be a destination?

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

In this context, the argument is that having an origin in Launceston, which is a population base connected to an airport, is the most viable thing we need to do. There are a huge number of obstacles. One obvious thing is that Launceston doesn't have a railway station, but the future aspiration for the railway is to originate from Launceston and, in my opinion, go as far as Lilydale.

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

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

**Ms RATTRAY** - Has the chamber looked at how you would get from Launceston to Lilydale on a train? Coldwater Creek is in the middle of nowhere as well.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Correct. This is only going from the recommendation that was made by state government to say, Lilydale to Turners Marsh and progressively to Launceston. You've probably heard this from a number of other proponents: there are a lot of obstacles to a railway becoming operationally ready. One would be a relationship with TasRail. The idea of going beyond Turners Marsh to Launceston means that you have to prove yourself to the statewide network as a rail operation, to allow them to have a relationship with you on their corridors. Any heritage railway with an aspiration to be a substantive visitor experience should be looking to east

## **PUBLIC**

to Launceston and developing that relationship with TasRail, which allows them to operate on other corridors.

I will extend this a little. The example from the Dunedin Railways, the Taieri Gorge Railway, started on one corridor. When I was the marketing manager for Taieri Gorge Railway, we were already working on other corridors. We were going as far as Christchurch, Christchurch to Arthur's Pass to Greymouth, with a viable working relationship with the then Tranz Rail, now KiwiRail. In this situation, the heritage group should be focusing east and it should be investing its energy in creating a meaningful and respectful relationship with TasRail that will allow them to operate on other corridors.

To Launceston and Scottsdale is a dead-end solution in terms of a future for a rail enterprise because you're on one corridor and you're bound by all the idiosyncrasies that come with that corridor. An example would be Abt Railway but not in the years prior to the state government bailout, for want of a better word. A substantive natural disaster went through that area and literally stymied the corridor for quite a number of months, if not years. The operation actually couldn't work the full extent of the corridor. For a railway to be dependent one corridor, your risk factors escalate.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You don't see Scottsdale as a destination for a rail experience because it still has the railway station. It's in bad repair but it's still there.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Yes. There are mechanical matters in terms of the duration of the journey. I could talk about the per-kilometre costs but I'm not a civil engineer. I think you've had people who have come and explained to you per-kilometre cost of infrastructure and the capital expenditure on top of that operational expenditure. The obstacles around running or setting up a heritage railway are fairly astronomical.

I really just want to talk about the visitor experience because that's where we come from. If you have journey from Launceston to Scottsdale, there are some mechanical issues that I would need to get clear on in terms of speed restrictions on that corridor. One of the issues of the corridor is it is very winding. In contemporary rail safety you have to operate at a very slow speed, particularly when you have passengers on board versus freight; derailing a freight train is very different from derailing a passenger train, for instance. I am assuming that the national rail safety people would be illustrating where your restrictions would be in speed.

Essentially, what that means is that you have a very slow journey from Launceston to Scottsdale. This is the dynamics of travel coming in; you've left Launceston as a visitor from Melbourne, you've jumped on the train and it has taken you three or four - umpteen - hours to get to Scottsdale. At that point, what do you do? You are hoping the train is going to take you back to Launceston that day, which means it could be up to an eight-hour experience - that's not a lot a fun on a rail car, I will say out loud. Or you overnight in Scottsdale and trying to find an alternate transport solution, because your rental car is back in Launceston. There are mechanical issues from the visitor experience we would look at and go - hang on a tick, the time duration and alternate solutions at Scottsdale make this problematic. If there is a railway, you can get past the per-kilometre cost, and the safety issues of being operational.

The rail and ride concept of Launceston to Lilydale allows your rail experience to be in a concise time frame that is manageable; you are less exposed to the per-kilometre cost with a two

## PUBLIC

or three-hour turnaround. You reach a rail head and the train has to do a number of things mechanically. You want your visitor to have a Tasmanian experience in the village of Lilydale. You have other provisional experiences around, whether it be hiring a bike, going on a half-day wine tour - whichever, and then you can go back to Launceston. You don't have any conundrums of - I am stuck in Lilydale, now what do I do, I don't have a rental car?

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

**Mr FARRELL** - I appreciate your work experience with New Zealand, because it seems to have a fairly good model around this issue and has been doing it for a number of years. It is good to read your history.

There have been a number of things put to the committee over its sitting session. What appears to be a huge block - and you have talked in your submission about the division in the community - it seems nobody is prepared to take on the leadership role and say, 'This is what we need to do; these are the people we need to talk to'. There's a local government body that seems very fixated on one. Do you feel it is the role of a state government or a regional tourism body which needs to step up and say, 'We want it to work', because at the moment, they won't work together? Who do you see as the person - local government level to start with - but that is probably not going to happen. Where do you see some sort of resolution?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Answering the leash of questions second, the first thing is to resolve this political process of this assessment and of the lower House making a judgment. From there, you have two councils. In a lot of these conversations, we have forgotten the City of Launceston which we shouldn't, because they are responsible for the corridor beyond Lilydale Falls. It is quite a stretch of responsibility in their municipality. There are two councils, a recreational trail group and a railway group. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, in August and September of last year, we reached out to both groups to say - surely, we can meet and find a resolve, this was prior to the announcement. I am more than happy to provide mediation. I would hope from a leadership prospective, mature heads would prevail and representatives from both councils, the rail trail and the railway - could find an accord to work with each other.

What I find in previous and in other experiences around the region, when you bring in a leader from a regional state body, you are stymieing the community's ability to lead themselves, which is not the best long-term solution. We always look for those leaders in the community who will stand up and will do the right thing, looking for a positive outcome, rather than a vested interest.

The answer is - not simple in the leash of prospective. This process at state government does need to resolve because it has been here since 2016; it is almost two years now. The groups responsible for the future use of the corridor need to meet and act like an intelligent - to be blunt - group of adults.

**Mr FARRELL** - On an issue that probably doesn't directly affect your role, but in general tourism, I take on board TasRail's comments about the future use of the line for freight, but there has been a change at board level and management level now and TasRail is being more proactive in seeking out freight. Thinking of the timber resources in the north-east in the future, what is the

## **PUBLIC**

impact through tourism moving logs on small roads has? Would a log harvest in the north-east be preferable to be moved by rail and off the roads or on larger trucks?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - It is a tricky question. Visitors at the moment share all our roads in regional Tasmania with road freight. It is unavoidable. In fact, one of the main feedbacks from visitor surveys is concern at the number of log trucks, which represents we are basically clean harvesting the entire state.

Dorset Council has put out a request for funding of the sidling road. A road solution is something that has to be pursued by the north-east, so separate to this agenda, but this is part of the solution if road freight is increased. Not being a civil engineer and only having spent half a dozen years hanging out with railway office people, one of the concerns TasRail had with this corridor, is the undulating nature. My understanding, means this a whole bunch of additional issues from what they have told me. It is probably why TasRail over the last period of years, have been realigning their rail corridors elsewhere in the state, because of safety issues of buckling, but also speed restrictions. The speed restriction for passenger would also apply to rail freight and time per kilometre is one of the logistical calculations.

To answer the quick question clearly: TasRail would need to come out and say for sure, in their opinion, what they would need to do to the corridor to make it freight ready. I imagine it would be a worst cost than passenger ready.

**Mr DEAN** - Thanks, Chris. Can I put this position to you? The train enthusiasts are telling us there are issues from Turners Marsh to Lilydale with the scenery and other things. If the government's current position is heritage rail from Turners Marsh to Lilydale and a trail from there through to Scottsdale is not acceptable or cannot work, is there some other alternative you have considered as a better proposition? Is there some other way? This committee has a very difficult task in trying to find a good position that can be accepted by both sides. We will try to do what is best for the region. Have you diverted your mind to this at all?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - The question is -

**Mr DEAN** - Another option. Is there another more suitable option or position? We are fixated currently on the government's position of Turners Marsh to Lilydale, Lilydale to Scottsdale for the other part of it, bike trail and so on. Is there any other way?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - We have had five years looking at this corridor for its potential to generate social economic return. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, prior to 2016 there really was only one proposition being considered - a rail trail. Even during that time, the conundrum for the rail trail was getting beyond Cold Water Creek from an engineering perspective. The aspiration would be leave from Launceston city, a population-based sink. You would need no other alternate transport outside getting on your bike and riding through the cycle pathways in Launceston city, connecting through to the back of Mowbray Racecourse. That is still highly unfeasible in terms of cost per kilometre for the rail trail. I really do feel for the railway guys. I spent my formative years and my professional career working with rail enthusiasts and volunteers and they are some of the best people you are ever going to meet. I get where their passion is, but you shake your head every time you look at the numbers; per-kilometre, it becomes so untenable.

## PUBLIC

I can't think of any other solution. The three scenarios we've had in front of us over that time is rail trail, recreation trail now, for the duration of the corridor, a railway for the duration of the corridor or this dual use. There has been some consideration about two avenues within the corridor but it is more prohibitive than the rail in terms of building those structures.

There was some conversation very early in the process, back in 2014. We invited Kate Wilson, who is the Chair of the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, to come over and speak with the community about what rail trails are and whether they wanted them. In that discussion there was talk about pulling up the sleepers and the iron, which are the main things that dilapidate, and leaving the ballast and surfacing over the top. Essentially, you leave the ballast there and this allows for a future consideration. If something changes, you could reconsider rail. The difficulty with ballast, and anything put on top of it, is that ballast is very hard and sharp, it comes right through the capping material and rips up anything that looks like a bike tyre. People fall off, they break legs and it becomes dangerous.

They were the considerations we were looking at around the corridor, saying, is there any other way we can do this? Safety and fences between the pathway and the railway are all prohibitive in terms of safety or cost.

**Mr DEAN** - You put in your submission that if it was heritage rail right through, you would get on, it would be an eight-hour return trip and that is not going to be appealing. If we went with the position that the government has now put forward, what changes? If somebody puts their bike on the train in Launceston, it goes through to Lilydale on the heritage rail, they ride from there through to Scottsdale and have to turn the bike around and ride back again because their cars are still here. It doesn't matter whether it is both, their cars are still here. It is still an eight-hour return journey. If they ride from Lilydale through to Scottsdale and back, it may even be longer.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - It comes down to how much of the corridor of the recreational trail you use. To ride from Lilydale to Denison Gorge and back again is very doable within a time frame. If your train destination is Lilydale it has what we call a turnaround, it has a two to three-hour turnaround. All of that recreational activity can happen. A half-day wine tour can happen. People who are not interested in either of those things can spend time at cafes and antique shops and spend money in Lilydale.

That is ultimately the difference from a consumable product, something that we can take to market and sell, which is far more viable than an eight-hour return to Scottsdale and back again. Even if you said - again, these are hypothetical time frames without looking at speed restrictions - that Lilydale to Scottsdale and back again is up to four hours, you are expending four hours of your time in a village. You are going over the tolerance point for most visitors because they would have done what they wanted to do within a two to three-hour period and you have given them downtime. From that argument, what I am looking at is the visitor experience rather than the mechanics of the railway to say, we are here to generate economic social return to the community, and to have passengers or visitors leave satisfied so they generate positive word of mouth. What you try to do in my line of work is avoid compromises that will compound upon that visitor satisfaction, that possible word of mouth.

When we look particularly at the concept level of designing something, and the reality is you don't often get to design a heritage railway, they are usually in place, so to build a new one

## **PUBLIC**

unique. So, at that concept level, you really want to think about getting your concept right and that goes beyond the emotional argument for railways.

**Mr DEAN** - The other important issue is the actual use of this corridor right through, if it is split into two. We have asked for figures in relation to Billycock Hill to Tonganah and back into Scottsdale, that area, but we can't get any figures on that at all, other than that we know a few people ride it and walk it. How much visitation will it generate? We now have George Town considering and trying to obtain funding for a fairly lengthy bike track from George Town. How many tracks can we have to entice people?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I will answer that in a couple of ways. The Billycock to Scottsdale component, it is probably a bit of negligence. I'm not meaning to be disrespectful to the Rotary Club or the council but it doesn't take much to put a track counter on a trail, like a car tracker on a road, that will tell you how much volume is moving. The conundrum you will have is finding out how many locals are using it, versus visitors. We know from the Otago Central Rail Trail experience, they have illustrated very clearly their local resident use of their corridor is one of their key recreational activities.

As I've driven through Scottsdale, which I probably do on a weekly basis, I always see someone walking down that corridor at different times of the day. You have to look at that situation and say, 'Well, there's the economics of the visitor and then there's the social return to the community'. The issue with Billycock to Scottsdale comes back to that origin destination. If you start in Scottsdale, get to Billycock, you look around and ask, 'Now what do I do?'. You've also got a duration matter, which is the connection between Launceston and Scottsdale. It is a good part of an hour's drive to get you, your bikes and your kids to a point in the middle of nowhere and coming back again. There are mechanic things in while that trail is probably not working as a visitor experience.

In terms of how many recreational trails you need, I was talking with the deputy mayor, now acting mayor, of George Town last night and he was illustrating his interests in that alternate route. From the end of our very animated conversation, I believe it is fair to say they have a mountain bike network to build first, which they've just secured federal funding for. Doing one of those takes two-and-a-half to three years of a process. You'll find that the George Town community will focus on that, which is their best bet.

In terms of how many trails we need - this is the argument that's been presented around the state in terms of mountain bike trail investment, which is different from rail trails and I have to make that abundantly clear - I won't put my seven-year-old daughter on a mountain bike track but I will put her on a rail trail. When you think about that, you are looking at the family market, you're looking at people who haven't been on a bike since high school who can still actually participate in this recreation versus a specialised recreation like mountain-biking where you have to buy a certain bike, you have to have a certain skill set, and there are shuttles to the top of the hill and all the rest.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You also need to be very brave, by the look of it.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - They need to be very brave, yes, and be willing to hit a tree or a rock. I can tell you from personal experience, they both feel the same on a mountain bike. The interesting thing about Derby, to digress, is their new trail investments have been recreational. They are



## **PUBLIC**

seeing the opportunity in the family market and the soft adventure market to have invested in the trails that go around the dam hole and make that destination more recreation-friendly because that is actually where most of the money is. To be blunt, it's like a ski field. If you've ever tried to learn how to ski, you go up to the top of the mountain, you hire all your gear - and that is \$200 - you get lessons from an instructor - there's another \$100 - you're on the slope for about an hour or an hour-and-a-half before you are completely exhausted and you end in the pub, spending money. It is the same for riding.

**Mr DEAN** - Then you're getting turfed out.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Yes. If I take my daughters on the rail trail, they won't ride for more than 30 minutes before they're looking for something to eat, something else to do, and then the wallet comes and the money flushes. Derby understands that. The potential in the rail trail is in the same area. This is a market that actually spends very well if you give them the product they want. From the top of Billycock to Scottsdale was only ever supposed to be stage 1 of something larger and different but it won't be working well at the moment.

**Mr DEAN** - You also mentioned the cost of setting up heritage rail would be astronomical.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Yes. That is probably being harsh, but I've based this on the Treasury report of their assumption of the various costs. I am sure other people who put through submissions have more expertise and have presented some of their viewpoints. I said something along the line that it's not that it will be bloody expensive, it's just how expensive it's going to be. I read in the paper this morning that the Yarra rail group spent 10 years upgrading four kilometres of trail and it cost the federal government \$3 million. I do not know the full context of that argument or if it is anywhere near comparative per kilometre.

**Mr DEAN** - I am trying to think of what happened yesterday. I think that the original costing there was about \$15 million and it came back to \$3 million.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Three-point-five million from the feds and \$3.75 million from the state.

**Mr DEAN** - That is right and it just came back and back and that is the same here. We have had costings here that differ tremendously. I am just putting this forward. The volunteers here virtually have their carriage and their train and their engines all set up now and with the offer of a repair to a bridge being done by another member of that organisation. So the cost has been very clearly inflated, absolutely inflated through the Government's side of things. I do not think it is realistic at all.

The cost of turning it into a rail trail is going to be equally expensive really when you think if they are going to tear up all the rails and there is really no return on steel now at all so that will be either at a cost or a very minimal return. Then you have all of the levelling out and all of the other things to do and if it is a gravel surface whatever it is going to be there will be the continual upkeep of that as well because of the torrential rains we get in particular in the north-east area. That is going to cause a lot of trouble. I would say that there is not going to be a huge difference because a lot of the infrastructure for heritage rail is already there.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Again, I am not a civil engineer or a rail engineer expert but I think most of the contention has been in the condition of the existing asset.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON (GRIFFIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

The difference between railway per kilometre and a rail trail is simply as you remove the ballast, the rail and the sleepers there is very little for you to maintain outside the surface. If you move a person on a bike across an engineered structure like a bridge versus - I do not know how heavy they are now at 20-30 tonne rail car - there is a material difference in terms of the condition that that piece of engineering has to be certified for.

I guess where the independent arbitism in this situation will be those people who certify the corridor to be safe and if the National Rail Safety Authority does not feel as though the work is to a safe standard you are not operating. They illustrate that the Ida Bay Railway no longer operates. The Kingston Flyer in Queenstown no longer operates for the same reasons so it is fair enough to say on the back of the envelope we have done our numbers but there is one authority that will allow you a 'yes' or a 'no' upon that work and whether they will sign it off. They are the independent arbiter on this.

I think everything else has been a subjective discussion of an idea of a railway and that is where the danger is, as you can walk yourself into what is nicely termed a 'white elephant' and someone is going to have to bail it out.

**Mr DEAN** - The other point is what Craig was talking about and that was you were saying that our road transport is here forever and he is pretty right on that. However, it was not long ago we were hearing that rail from the south to the north would never be used for log transportation again because it was much easier, the double loading and unloading and all the rest of that was just not viable; it was not economically acceptable. However, that has now all changed and we are seeing a lot of log movement from the south of the state to the north of the state by train.

If you have a facility, a corridor that is currently intact, the corridor with rail there now who is to say that in five years' time, three years' time, 10 years' time that we are not going to see once again the very great benefits and advantage of a train movement between the north-east and here and particularly Bell Bay because that is where a lot of the forest is retained in that area.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Again, you were talking to the tourism guy about rail freight and again the information I have has been second-hand from commentary from TasRail over the last four or five years on the nature of the corridor and the undulating nature of the corridor against contemporary rail safety and transport. They are the experts who will say whether there is a future use for the corridor and they have in writing and okay, the chair has changed, the management has changed but it is still a legal entity that has made an advice. The advice was they have no interest in the corridor. As a layman I have to look at that and say they are the experts in this situation. Unless there has been some material change in rail technology or consideration for the corridor or their willingness to invest in it then you can pretty much write it off that they are not interested.

**Mr DEAN** - That is the same right now. That is the position now and that was the position previously for the south to north rail as well. They made changes to that line. They have had to make changes -

**CHAIR** - Do you have a question?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, they made changes to that line so I am saying that the changes to the north-east line could be made.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr GRIFFIN** - It is purely hypothetical and again I have worked in railways with railway people and I can still vaguely understand half the words they use on the telephone. It is so highly unlikely and maybe it is a part of this process that you reach out to TasRail and you ask them their expert opinion. If the expert opinion is no, well we have asked them three times now, that should be enough.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - You were on the Dunedin rail, what distance is that?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I think it is 45 kilometres. It might be longer. It has been a long time since I had to regurgitate those statistics.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Just approximately, yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - In time duration is a four-hour return rail journey from Dunedin to Pukerangi. If you want to go to Middlemarch it is five hours and a quarter.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - It is four hours return.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Four-hour return and half-day products. From a mechanical perspective of tourism, we could run the train in the morning, turn it over at lunchtime and run it in the afternoon and have the thing with 250 passengers per departure in the middle of summer 23 years ago.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Do you happen to know the cost?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - The cost per passenger is ranging up in the \$80s at the moment. I used to sell it for \$49.50 but it is probably double that price now.

**CHAIR** - It is \$105.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - We heard yesterday from the rail regulator that for heritage rail the ideal distance was 1 to 4 kilometres.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Yes, there are a number of differences with Taieri Gorge railway and this is where I said before it is a good case study to pay attention to but you have to be careful on the scale. When they picked up the rail back in the late 1980s, so the corridor, they made a choice not to go a bit beyond Middlemarch and to allow that track to be pulled up. That was the decision of the Otago Excursion Train Trust at the time. What they essentially picked up was with a rail line that had been functioning from Dunedin to Clyde as they were building the hydro-electric scheme and they literally had picked it up without any dilapidation or decrease in maintenance. The then NZ Rail, NZR, had been maintaining that corridor at a sufficient level. They bought it for \$1 and they did not have the structural impost. It took them, I think I was there in my third year before it turned a profit. It was co-owned, and still is, by Dunedin City Council. They were using it as a loss lever for a few other enterprises. It was a part of the package of enterprises they ran and the railway was always designed to lose money because they do and they would offset that against the profits they were making in other enterprises. That was all fairly disclosed at the time.

## PUBLIC

I think the two years we made a profit, or looked like we were going to make a profit, the marketing manager would help us spend a lot of money so we would not make a profit. That is the history of that.

In that situation you were talking about a volume argument too, mind you. Dunedin is not Launceston. It has at least double our visitation. It has built visitor attractions. Honestly, here in Launceston I keep hammering at people's doors saying we need to go over and look at Dunedin. It is a case study that we need to explore as a city but the railway itself had a fairly integrated marketing program with other experiences in Dunedin. We could keep people in Dunedin for two days doing paid experiences and the railway as a half-day was very viable in that context.

It was offset by other enterprises, and this is where I come back to this point of Launceston to Lilydale not being your solution but Launceston as a hub being your solution. One thing that we were doing and making quite a lot of money off was servicing cruise ships pulling into Port Chalmers on train charters. We were running an additional 30 train charters a year. Utilising our asset not on an argument on our corridor, we would be running trains down to Invercargill to Christchurch across to Arthurs Pass, et cetera. You are talking about a professionally run railway company. At that time there were 20 paid staff and no volunteers in that enterprise at all. The volunteer group helped out around excursions. It was a complete dynamic where you had a manageable, consumable tourism product of four hours and a professionally run company, underwritten by the local council, that then operated other enterprises.

I am not sure if that answered the question or I went too far.

**CHAIR** - It is 116 kilometres as well. For our return - 116 kilometres.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - You can see, it's been a while.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - On the costing, the ticket for a rail trail - and you might not be able to answer this. When the tourist comes and wants to pay for a ticket, the same as on the Murray River where you go on a paddle-steamer and it is \$22 or \$24, whatever it is, is there a certain bracket that people are prepared to pay to go on a train ride? We've heard different prices. One of the groups here said that it was going to be \$100 to Scottsdale and back.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - They are always price-sensitive. I think I referred to one of the earlier proposals that suggested a family ticket at \$400 return. You can get your family to Melbourne and back for \$400 if there's a good deal on Jetstar. That's the kind of price that is outside the sensitivity. In terms of pricing on a railway or any other half-day or full-day experience, you have a bit of elasticity at the top and then you have a quality argument at the bottom of your price range.

If you go too low, it looks like you're not a quality product or you're targeting a market that's in the affordability bracket - nothing wrong with that. At the top end, you've got a little bit of elasticity but there is a certain point where, if you go too far, you will see a decline in sales. I know the Taieri Gorge Railway goes very well. Their current marketing manager was there when I was there and I'm pretty sure that they've been playing the elasticity at the top of the range because they are dealing with such volume now that they can afford to lose a little bit of passenger volume in terms of their yield. The top end of the bracket is probably \$100-and-something for a half-day experience in Dunedin, New Zealand.

## **PUBLIC**

I was about to go into the details of a railcar versus a train with rolling stock, but it's a completely different situation. You have elasticity at the top.

Probably one of the other conundrums with pricing is the price the visitor is willing to pay versus what a local is willing to pay. Our visitors coming from the mainland or international are probably more open-minded about spending on their holidays than a local person or a Tasmanian on holiday. That's where you get this conundrum of a local price versus a tourist price. In there, that gap can be quite large, depending on what the value proposition or the affordability of the market is that you're looking for.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - West Coast Wilderness Railway has two different price structures.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Correct. The situation on the West Coast Railway is that it's fed mainly by interstate and international tourists, and some domestic tourists. This is one of the other mechanics of travel - its proximity to a population base is 4 to 4.5 hours.

If you are operating a service out of Launceston you are probably going to get a lot more locals and a lot of price sensitivity. Probably, your local price will be much lower than what the Abt Railway is offering. You are probably going to depend more on the local market; 30 to 40 per cent of your passengers will be from the local market versus visitors. You will have to respond price-wise and drop your price down to ensure your volume of passengers on board.

There are dynamics in every situation of a railway, and with this one you are going to have some real revenue issues.

**Mr FARRELL** - Getting back to the New Zealand example, and it was probably after your time there, but the whole New Zealand railway system went through a terrible mess with privatisation. It was a horrific time and they've recovered pretty well. How was the relationship then with Tranz Rail and the heritage groups as far as access went? Was there a specific setup to handle that?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - There was a series of privatisations. There was New Zealand Rail going to Tranz Rail, and since then Tranz Rail has changed hands about three or four times. Now it is KiwiRail and there is government ownership back on the infrastructure, from memory - I am a bit vague on that point.

On the interrelationship, I can speak from the Taieri Gorge Railway perspective. The relationship was good. There were restrictions put upon us in terms of going through the Otira Tunnel. We didn't have airconditioned carriages and safety conditions had changed so we couldn't go through that tunnel. That was probably the worst of it. There were the usual issues around scheduling, which was very normal for railway people to be dealing with. Some railway men - I say 'men' because there weren't any women working in the railways 23 years ago - can be quite cantankerous individuals, but this group at Taieri Gorge Railway had built a trusted and respected relationship with Tranz Rail. Most of them had been medium to senior management before they retired from Tranz Rail to work on the Taieri Gorge Railway. We could navigate our relationship quite effectively.

## **PUBLIC**

I do remember other, smaller railways arguing, being upset and going to the wall because they didn't have a relationship.

I am saying in connection to this enterprise with TasRail, be highly respectful of TasRail because they could easily make or break you based on that goodwill.

**Mr FARRELL** - One of the other issues we are looking at is that there are different ways to access railways. The current Government brought in the Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Bill to allow the corridor to be transferred to another entity and have nothing to do with TasRail, but there are also models to do it under the Rail Infrastructure Act through a lease with TasRail. How that happens seems very dependent on the preference of the Government. Were there any models in New Zealand where former government lines were transferred to other groups, either for rail or rail trail use?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Yes, again in the Dunedin example back in the early 1980s - before my time - the ownership was transferred on the exchange of \$1. That happened a lot in New Zealand for some odd reason with infrastructure when they wanted to offload something they no longer wanted; you could buy it for a buck.

That was a very different circumstance. The rail trail was in the same situation: a very small monetary transaction to say that a transaction occurred; the responsibility of management and upgrade was at the private sector's discretion and you lived and died by that.

**Mr FARRELL** - Was there any condition that if there was rail in the future they could reclaim the real estate or was it gone, off the books, finished?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I am uncertain of the governance and/or lease versus ownership arrangement. That was not something the marketing manager had to worry too much about.

**Mr FARRELL** - Yes, I understand that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - With regard to the Launceston City Council, and you mentioned that they have a significant stake in this, yet they have been fairly slow to come to the discussions. I recall having a discussion with the mayor about three years ago and it was brief because he indicated at the time that Launceston City Council wasn't interested. Can you apprise us of any more up-to-date information? I have read a couple of articles in the paper and we can call Launceston City Council but I thought you, with your relationship, knowledge and understanding, might have a better understanding of where they sit now.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I would be loath to speak on their behalf. They are a funding partner of Tourism Northern Tasmania so we are conversational with them on a regular basis, both strategic and operational.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I thought you might have some knowledge.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Generally speaking, there has been a neutrality around this matter for a number of years. I cannot pontificate as to why that is, but it has not been on the top of their priority list - that would be a nicer way of putting it. In terms of the priorities we work with them

## **PUBLIC**

on of attracting sporting tournaments to the city, leveraging Mona Foma and other things, this is not on our top-10 list if we are talking with meter.

It is a priority and where it sits on their priority list when it comes to [ inaudible 10.49.50].

**Mr DEAN** - I am very impressed with a couple of comments from the submission so if I can refer them and question you. The comment.

I believe that neither project will reach their fullest potential in benefitting their community based solely on their own merits.

and then you go on to say -

What must be avoided at all costs, is a continuation of one project demanding the failure of the other, to guarantee its own success.

Chris, are saying for this to be successful and to get any real returns to the areas of Scottsdale and Lilydale, the two must work together?

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Correct, and after the state Treasurer proposed dual use, I was sceptical and it took consideration to think exactly how this could work out. The scepticism from this was probably felt by everybody in this room. Literally, the battle lines had been drawn for and against one or the other. This was to a point of being absolutely absurd and to say discussion in the community was toxic, would be an understatement and completely inappropriate.

In looking at the conundrums from the railway perspective, it was a per kilometre reality to break it down and we have talked about the visitor experience and actually making something consumable and sellable. That is their conundrum.

For the recreational trail, anything past Coldwater Creek becomes an engineering nightmare. Aspirationally to connect it to the city would be great; the appetite and willingness to be pursued by City of Launceston and others is not particularly high. That is where the co-dependence is.

The reality is to be able to take a train journey from Launceston to Lilydale and connect to the recreational trail benefits them. It makes a more consumable product we can sell to visitors to have a rail and ride or rail return experience, half day tours and other things that can be connection. From the visitor perspective and some of the unassailable issues in front of us it is actually co-dependence. If one wants their outcome, it is going to have to be dependent on the other being successful.

**Mr DEAN** - I appreciate the comment. With the Lilydale to Wyena stretch, the train enthusiasts say they would like to go to Wyena with heritage rail. There is the tunnel and Denison Gorge which are two very important features on that part of the track. You are saying it is not a position you would support.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - We would not. It comes down first the origin destination. Where a train stops or a rail trail begins, is where the economic transaction is going to occur. Lilydale is the most likely way the community is going to have an approved return from either experience.

## **PUBLIC**

I did mention rather candidly about tunnel. That is, when you put a train through a tunnel it gets dark. I have been on hundreds and thousands of rail journeys. That is what happens when you go through a tunnel. I have ridden through a tunnel on a bike and there is more sense of the heritage of the structure and why it is there and you can interpretative signage whichever. Normally on a train you go through a tunnel, it gets dark and then it gets light again. That is from the passenger perspective. To give you some context, we have been working with passengers on rail journeys and tourism rail journeys. Some 95 per cent to 98 per cent are Joe Bloggs average passengers. Only around 2 per cent are rail enthusiasts. So the majority of your market it gets dark and it then light again. For the enthusiasts, it is a fantastic experience going through, because they understand a lot more about where they are and what it is about, but it is actually not your market. That is my conundrum with the tunnel - it just gets dark.

**Mr DEAN** - An interesting comment, because many bike riders will not ride through tunnels. I have ridden around the world in most countries and riding through a tunnel is not the best thing for a bike rider.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - No. It is whether you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. That is usually the thing.

**Mr DEAN** - I asked the question right from the word go, you have not spoken to the heritage rail. This is a pity, because you could be one who might be able to negotiate the position here somewhere.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - There has been a lot of negative commentary. Tourism Northern Tasmania's perception was we were being lined up as the cycling ones and therefore the enemy, which was unfortunate. But from late August through to September of last year, I was engaging with Rolf Berry [tbc], chair of the rail group saying, 'Look, this announcement has come out, surely we can get together'. His email reactions to me were that he did want to do and acknowledged the commentary in the community, were in his words 'appalling' and did want to meet. We endeavoured to do this prior to the announcement of the select committee, so the meeting didn't happen.

I am saying, as early as 2016 when the rail idea was first voted, we have tried and asked but there hasn't been an opportunity or a forum where we've engaged. It is a pity, because some of the stuff could have been probably mitigated earlier.

**Mr DEAN** - It seems we are focused on the two sides, rather than trying to bring it together and is the point you are making and what we should be strongly working on.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - I would agree.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Chris, for your time today. We appreciate it, particularly with all your information about New Zealand, who seem to do everything very well.

**Mr GRIFFIN** - Thank you. We have saying in New Zealand if you scratch the paint, you will find the rust.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON (GRIFFIN)**



## **PUBLIC**

**Mr RAY BRIEN**, SECRETARY, TAS VETERANS CYCLING COUNCIL, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Mr Brien, thank you very much for coming in. Just to remind you that this is a public hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege but we need to remind you that anything you say outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. That is a copy for witnesses of the information just in front of you there if you have not read it or you are not aware of the process. The evidence you present is being recorded and will be available on the committee website when it becomes available.

The procedure we intend to follow is if you would like to make a short statement and then members can ask you some questions. If you would like to start off.

**Mr BRIEN** - Thank you, Madam Chair. My apologies if I cover topics in this statement that have already been canvassed before the committee.

**CHAIR** - No, that is fine.

**Mr BRIEN** - I wish to speak in support of the North East Recreation Trail as well as representing the views of the Tasmanian Veterans Cycling Council, the TVCC. I will be speaking in support of the recreation trail based on my experience riding a number of rail trails in Japan.

The members of TVCC have undertaken numerous cycling tourism trips in New Zealand, mainland Australia and Japan. They hold similar views to myself in supporting the development of the North East Recreation Trail. I have noticed on these trips they and myself have numerous discussions with local residents and business operators, all of whom supported the establishment of their rail trail and subsequent benefits that derive from these trails. The benefits included an increase in business; they are established to cater for tourist accommodation, cafes and cycling support services and the consequential increase in local employment, not only for new businesses but the established businesses.

In particular, we support the North East Recreation Trail by highlighting that the initial and ongoing costs to establish and maintain the recreational trail would be less than that of a tourist railway. Just sitting in for the discussion before I will not continue with that one.

The opportunities to develop the development of accommodation, support and refreshment facilities along the entire corridor would be increased with the recreational trail rather than a train. These opportunities would be greatly increased if the trail was extended from Launceston to Scottsdale, as a dream. The smaller communities such as Lalla and Lebrina would be well placed to provide these facilities. We feel the cycling option would lead to people making Scottsdale their destination and spending at least one night in the area, increasing the tourist spend. As the rail proposal is a day excursion the time spent in Scottsdale by rail travellers would be limited before reboarding to return to their starting point.

The recreational trail would help to move cyclists off the major roads in the area increasing the safety for both cyclists and other road users. The main through roads in the Dorset area generally have narrow shoulders and deep drop-offs at the edge of the bitumen necessitating cyclists to ride some distance from the left edge of the road.

## **PUBLIC**

We also feel that the recreation trail, if approved, would be very quickly established and operating. Again, we feel the train proponents have underestimated the time required to get the trail infrastructure up to standard before operation. As an example, when their submission on the first day of this inquiry there was a question about the requirement to replace sleepers. I think their answer was somewhere around 20 per cent of sleepers would have to be replaced and that somewhere between 3500 and 5000 sleepers. They then supported that by saying that their volunteers would replace 130 sleepers in a day at the railway at Sheffield. Using a volunteer workforce which has the restrictions of volunteer availability and also weather restrictions, that task could take anything up to six months just to do between Turners Marsh and Scottsdale. If we were to extend the railway from Turners Marsh to Lilydale, and then extend the train to Scottsdale, it would be an incredible amount of increased time.

Not so many years ago as the training coordinator of Volunteering Tasmania working extensively with numerous organisations around the north-east of the state, based on that experience, I feel that the train proponents have a heavy reliance on a long-term volunteer workforce undertaking hard manual labour and that is not realistic. If there was a large population base, such as that available to the Yarra Valley Railway, then it may be feasible.

Recreation trails can and do work and the committee has had sufficient evidence - and from numerous models - to support this case. We feel the Dorset community, as a whole, would be best served by a recreation trail over the entire distance but the one from Lilydale to Scottsdale would be a good starting point.

I thank the committee for their time and I am happy to answer questions.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is it all right if I call you Ray?

**Mr BRIEN** - Yes, please.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks, Ray. With your extensive knowledge and experiences on rail trails - I've not ridden any rail trails, so I'm not a rider - I am interested in what sort of terrain. One of the issues raised at the beginning of this was the farming areas that the rail goes through and how that might impact on the farming community. Can you give me some idea of whether you went through any of those sorts of scenarios in your travels?

**Mr BRIEN** - There are two specifically in northern Hokkaido where the rail trail runs through mainly agricultural land. The railway gradients themselves, to a great extent, rarely exceed one in 30, which is a very gentle climb for most cyclists. There seems to be no major interaction between the rail trail and the local horticultural industry. As such, quite a few of the farms have actually opened sort of farm gate-type experiences to stop off for refreshments and whatever, look around the farm and continue on.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They were all working enterprises with that type of arrangement through that process.

**Mr BRIEN** - Yes, they certainly were.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr DEAN** - On that question about the farmer intervention in Hokkaido, I have also ridden those. You don't know though, do you - you don't know, I don't know - whether there were any concerns with the farmers in that area at all. Did you stop and ask them if there are any concerns?

**Mr BRIEN** - Through our cycling guide, we were talking to a couple of the people where we were stopping for morning tea, et cetera, and the general opinion was that it was a good idea, that it was regenerating the whole area because young families are moving back into an area where the population was ageing rapidly.

**Mr DEAN** - A couple of questions I want to ask, you heard what Chris Griffin said in relation to, one will not be an economical return to the area without the other. The two must work together. What is your view on that position?

**Mr BRIEN** - My primary view is that that it sounds like a great idea and if we can start with the rail trail from Scottsdale or the recreation trail from Lilydale through to Scottsdale, that is fine. My concern with that is that the rail side of things could take an inordinate amount of time to get up and running and prove itself. We may be back here in five years' time saying, 'should we rip the railway up from Turners Marsh to Scottsdale?'.

**Mr DEAN** - On that point, are you aware that the engine and carriage and that are just about ready to go, or very close, as I understand it? It is just about to be put on the line today and the line between Turners Marsh and Lilydale in many respects is in reasonable condition and that could happen, I would suggest, quicker than it could become a rail trail. The rail trail has to remove all the lines, it has to have all the ballasts sorted out, crushed and set in.

**CHAIR** - And your question?

**Mr DEAN** - The amount of work to put in the rail trail is probably more than to get the train up and running. I am trying to be fair.

**Mr BRIEN** - As the gentleman before me said, I am not a civil engineer. However, it has been proven more often that the rail trail can be quickly established. I don't think the time involved to remove the rail infrastructure would be any greater than six months. We don't know how long it is going to take to get the railway up and running. There has been no estimate.

**Mr DEAN** - Have you spoken to rail enthusiasts?

**Mr BRIEN** - I have had some discussions with them.

**Mr DEAN** - What came out of those discussions?

**Mr BRIEN** - Simply around how they were going to do it and things like that. I am open to listening to their arguments and such.

**Mr DEAN** - Who did you discuss that with?

**Mr BRIEN** - I prefer not to mention his name.

**Mr DEAN** - Okay. You mentioned the maintenance on the heritage rail would be quite high.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr BRIEN** - It is ageing infrastructure. It will require constant maintenance and their rail motor is not brand new and would require quite a considerable amount of money to maintain it. We don't know how often they intend to run this train.

**Mr DEAN** - Would you agree that the maintenance of a rail trail track will also take a lot of work and maintenance because of the gravel surface? It is not going to be a sealed surface.

**Mr BRIEN** - The rail bed caters well for run-off and rain already. After establishment, I don't think it will be a great deal of task to do.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Ray, is the ride from Launceston to Scottsdale an ideal distance for members of your organisation?

**Mr BRIEN** - It depends on the riders and their ability, but generally, from Lilydale to Scottsdale would be a pleasant cruising day's ride for us. Some of our members would do that in half a day and want to go elsewhere. Others would make it a nice five to six-hour ride. From Launceston through to Scottsdale, I would envisage it would be marketed as a two-day ride split to around 35 kilometres each day.

**CHAIR** - That is for your organisation, for the veterans.

**Mr BRIEN** - Yes, that is my own experience. However, it depends on the person whether they do it in a day or half a day. It also depends on the surface of the recreational trail. They are all factors.

**Mr FARRELL** - As a cyclist, what are your thoughts on the Billycock track? Do you and your members regularly use that section of trail?

**Mr BRIEN** - We would use that section as a group possibly two to three times a year. As individuals, I am not really sure. I ride through there and ride down to Derby, although I do not do mountain-biking. The set up and maintenance of that is quite good. Occasionally, because it is all done by volunteers, there are some maintenance issues but most of the time it is quite adequate.

**Mr FARRELL** - Do cycle clubs have any input into the maintenance?

**Mr BRIEN** - Teabug [TBC] operates some working bees and have helped out with those on a couple of occasions.

**Mr DEAN** - Your submission includes the point that the trail will provide -

Opportunities for development of accommodation, support and refreshment facilities along the entire corridor as opposed to the limited stopping points of a train.

## **PUBLIC**

You are saying these things will occur if it is a rail trail. Can you tell me what accommodation and refreshment facilities are likely to pop up along the rail trail if it is put in place?

**Mr BRIEN** - Say, from Lilydale through to Scottsdale, you have Lebrina and there is already a café there.

**Mr DEAN** - They are not popping up; they have already popped up.

**Mr BRIEN** - They may increase, there is that chance. Also, anywhere along the rail line it might be as in the New Zealand situation. People have opened their properties for B&B and tourist accommodation that is accessible from the rail trail. We can't say exactly how many opportunities there will be but anyone could take the bull by the horns and do it.

**Mr DEAN** - To be fair to both sides, couldn't that happen with heritage rail as well? Heritage rail would stop at Lebrina, Wyena, Scottsdale, Lilydale and other areas along this path. The train wouldn't run from Launceston to Scottsdale without stopping.

**Mr BRIEN** - I have no idea of what the rail schedule is going to be but, if they want to get all the way from Turners Marsh to Scottsdale and back in a day, there are opportunities to stop and allow people on and off the train. There is no real reason to stop at Lebrina unless you are going to take people off and put them on a bus to visit the vineyards.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You could walk up the hill, Ray, if you were really fit.

**Mr DEAN** - Have you studied what the potential use or visitation rates might be of those various trails, such as Lilydale to Wyena and on to Scottsdale?

**Mr BRIEN** - No, not really. I haven't personally done that but I have seen figures bandied around by other people with more experience than myself in the thousands. I can't commit to any particular figure.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you, Ray.

**CHAIR** - We appreciate the submission you put in, and thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## **PUBLIC**

**Prof DAVID ADAMS**, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - As the evidence at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege we need to remind you that anything you say outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. The copy of information for witnesses is available on the table if you have not read it or you want to have a glance at it. The evidence you present is being recorded and will be available on *Hansard* and on the committee website when it becomes available.

By way of introduction the procedure we are following if you would like to make a short statement and then members can ask you some questions.

**Prof ADAMS** - Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement.

**Mr DEAN** - David, would you be tabling that at the end? Is there a chance of that happening?

**Prof ADAMS** - Yes, I can table the notes, yes.

**Mr DEAN** - That would be good.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Prof ADAMS** - I am here essentially in two capacities, one as the Professor of Management and Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Tasmania interested in regional development and in particular the link between regional development and learning and education futures in Tasmania. It was mentioned earlier that, at the opening of SteamFest, I made the observation that SteamFest would be a classroom of the future, close to the community, lots of skills to be learnt there, a good place for young people and others to stay and for tourists coming through to learn. The whole concept of learning in place is an important part of our university's directions. Secondly, I am here as a citizen very interested in heritage and in regional development more broadly.

My main two comments today are around the importance of the north-east corridor discussion being located in the context of the future of the region and the future of Tasmania, particularly in terms of the experiential visitor economy, and the contribution potentially of the reinvigorated rail footprint to regional development in various machinations. My second main comment today is around the current cottage industry nature of heritage rail in Tasmania and generally, therefore, its limited ability to engage in these broader, essentially state level policy conversations about the future. They are the two main points I'd like to make.

Basically, globally heritage rail, heritage transport, is emerging as a significant industry in its own right. So instead of thinking of it as a series of activities it should be thought of as an industry, and in particular its connection with the experiential visitor economy. An increasingly heritage infrastructure and associated activity, such as tourism and education, are becoming central to the revitalisation of our regions, both here in Australia and overseas.

Words come to mind recently such as the Premier in his state of the state address talking about inclusive and strategic growth for regions. The crucial question there is, what are the endogenous or local assets in regions that can be better organised to create value, to retain people

## **PUBLIC**

in the region and to attract flows of tourists and flows of people interested in settling in educational, cultural, recreational, learning or investment in regions?

At the same our historical reservoir of volunteers is rapidly declining, along with much of the heritage infrastructure and this increasing competition, as we are seeing in this debate, around scarce land use and the railways taking up increasing costs associated with preservation. However, I think the committee is aware that the loss of heritage rail does reduce the opportunity cost for any future regional network approach.

I made the observation that in Tasmania rail is organised more as a series of cottage industries rather than an industry in its own right and therefore it struggles for sustainability; it struggles to engage in these sorts of conversations because the individual operators tend not to have the economies of scale and scope to be able to do the necessary research, advocacy and support that most industry associations would actually have.

The debate over the future of the north-east rail line leads to the conversation about how are we, in Tasmania, going to rethink the future of the original rail footprint and its potential contribution to our future? The evidence very much is that the rewards could well be there. I am objective enough to be able to say the evidence globally around heritage rail and its viability depends very much not just on visitor flows but also on the ability to organise it properly and to have, in particular, governance arrangements that involve government, independent boards, philanthropy and community.

At this point, I will table a very recent document from Heritage New South Wales Transport Heritage which was released last week, I think, and so it's an exemplar of what a number of us would believe is the appropriate governance infrastructure for Tasmania and for the region around how to create an industry. I will table that. It is on the website.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Prof ADAMS** - The importance of that approach is essentially to create a not-for-profit limited by guarantee company that takes on a range of functions, in this case statewide, associated with the preservation, restoration, marketing, regulation and future of heritage infrastructure. It is an entity that would enable, if it occurred in Tasmania, the support to continue for the existing multiplicity of small operators but provide them with the back-of-house capability that they all lack. So, capability around marketing, capability about engaging these conversations and being able to invest in research and evidence-based views on future viability, but also the ability for training and development opportunities, support for volunteers, potentially the partnerships with tourism.

Essentially, what you have is one industry talking to another, whereas at the moment we don't have the scale in Tasmania within the heritage rail sector to do that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is it like a hub-and-spoke model?

**Prof ADAMS** - Yes, a hub-and-spoke model, but very much also net worked so that we don't lose that focus on community ownership and community vibrancy but we are able to create the capability to understand and shape the future of the industry.

## **PUBLIC**

In parallel I make the observation that parts of the heritage industry, for example museums, are well organised nationally, well funded and supported, and can operate at scale. Launceston has the largest cultural arts infrastructure of any regional council in Australia, as two members here would be well aware, and some of the risks associated with that.

**Mr DEAN** - We keep telling the south about it.

**Prof ADAMS** - That ability to leverage off the cultural framework in Tasmania that already exists around heritage and to provide a more integrated approach between the organised parts of the heritage sector and the slightly disorganised parts would be one of the things in scope.

It could also focus very much on the workforce of the future and on how to leverage the education and training opportunities. The one I often mention is edu-tourism. If you imagined 200 000 visitors to the north-east each year and, of those, half had the opportunity to undertake a course associated with heritage, even if it was a two-hour course or a two-day course, which was potentially linked to accreditation associated with TAFE or other pathways, two things happen: one, you skill people up; two, you create local employment; and three, you keep people in the place longer.

You only have to spend time in Scottsdale on a Saturday morning, as I often do, to realise that Scottsdale has not yet had the flow-on effects of the existing tourism activity in the north-east.

Being able to have connectivity for people to spend time in each of the settlements and to spend money there is really what regional development is about. Rail provides both a content and also a means of connectivity to the various settlements within the region.

My main comment to the committee is that the question of the viability and the value proposition for the north-east rail corridor, in my view, should be framed as: First, how can it contribute to the future of the region and Tasmania as part of a more strategic view of heritage? Second, if we take that approach, the heritage rail transport sector does need to put itself on a more capable industry footing to be able to engage in that quite important conversation about Tasmania's future.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, David. Questions?

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Did you say volunteers are declining in Tasmania?

**Prof ADAMS** - Two things are happening. The age of volunteers is going up and therefore the replacement is becoming more problematic. The younger generation tend to volunteer as much or more than the older generation, of which I would now be a part, but the younger generations tend to engage with multiple types of activities.

In the sense of it declining, the stable supply of volunteers for most sectors is in decline. You have more people coming in and out, but fewer people staying there as a volunteer vocation. That has implications, particularly where volunteers need particular sets of skills to be able to contribute.



## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - I very much appreciate your coming along today. I heard your address at the opening of SteamFest recently and was very encouraged by what I heard in regard to the heritage aspect for all of Tasmania, not only for this line.

Can we drill down a bit more on that heritage course concept that you've planted in my mind? I am already seeing this building sitting in a disused railway yard that would make a perfect classroom for holding classes and that type of thing. Is that what you mean - did I get the right message when you talked about that?

**Prof ADAMS** - Yes, basically. If we think of why we might want to have classrooms like SteamFest in the future, there are two or three reasons.

One is that it's a way of keeping young people in their places. Instead of the idea that if you're in Scottsdale or Deloraine or St Helens or Flinders Island you have to travel to Launceston or Hobart or Melbourne to get an education, you flip that around to ask, what is it that you could learn?

For example, we're currently digitising much of the heritage assets of northern Tasmania. Once they're digitised they are discoverable and so young people in Scottsdale could start doing courses associated with digitisation of historical records but then start to engage with that history itself. They could be the fireman on the tender on the railway; they could be the next train buff. They can have that learning in setting.

If I were to make a quick comment about the changing nature of education, education nowadays is considered one-third, one-third, one-third: one-third in the classroom that many of us experienced; one-third in group work, often not in the classroom and online; and one-third in work-integrated learning. That means that potentially two-thirds of how people learn in the future - not just young people but older people as well - can occur in place.

It's coming back to: why would we do that? One of the reasons, again, is that it attracts and retains people in the region, it creates skills in the region that can be transferrable to other sectors and it creates employment. It has a regional development component. There is a pedagogical and educational argument but that is connected to the regional development argument.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You are getting assistance as well, David. That's always helpful.

**Prof ADAMS** - We're noting here that the university supported the establishment of a study hub on the west coast - the first one funded in Australia - based at Zeehan. It's next-door to the Heritage Museum in the Scout Hall, is community-based and is going to focus on a range of courses that will attract and retain four groups of people that are relevant to this conversation: young people leaving school without a pathway; workers out of work, wanting to maintain their skills; people who are disengaged from normal social lives, perhaps sole parents at home.

Again, they can do things in their local community that get them skills for work, skills for fun and skills to be socially more engaged. This can occur not just with heritage, it can occur with bike trails. It's not saying that this is a heritage-only conversation. It's to say that it's an important building block in understanding the future of the region.

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - From memory, they have a bike maintenance course at the high school where they have year 11 and 12, which is fantastic because not everyone has the capacity to repair their bike if they need to. They take a bit of hammering on some of those mountain bike tracks. Again, that's another skill being learnt.

**Prof ADAMS** - I could probably name 20 skills associated with bike or train maintenance. We might think it's about fixing a bike but it's about physics, maths, engineering, team work, and occupational health and safety. There is an endless array, as well as the value of fixing a bike or preserving railway infrastructure.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks, David.

**Mr DEAN** - The mayor of this city said it is critical to maintain the heritage value to this area. We have had streets of heritage maintained and I think what you are saying is this corridor has significant heritage value to the region, to the north of the state and Tasmania. You are saying we ought to be very careful with our management of this into the future?

**CHAIR** - Maybe let David say that.

**Mr DEAN** - That is my question to David; we need to be very careful with the management of it.

**Prof ADAMS** - My only reframing would be to say it is crucial to the future of Tasmania. The future of the region and the future of Tasmania, not only because it is a value in its own right, but because it will create future value in the same way investment historically in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery and at Inveresk is starting now to become a major asset for Launceston, that attracts and retains people. It keeps them there for an extra day or so to spend time visiting and therefore brings value into the community.

That is my observation in economics, we are saying; the opportunity cost once the rail is gone is lost. The use value for the future cannot be extracted once it is gone and I am painting some pictures of potential future use value. Whether or not that in its own justifies investment is a matter for the committee and for others, but unless we broaden the conversation to what the future use value could be, not just economic but social and environmental use value, then we would lose that opportunity.

**Mr DEAN** - There are examples where we have lost that opportunity through the destruction of our heritage previously, which we now say we should never have done. The C. H. Smith building would be a good example, the façade has been retained and there is a significant part of the heritage of this region simply allowed to disappear or be destroyed, is not in the interests of the region and area and heritage.

**Prof ADAMS** - Yes. My comment would be it is not obvious the removal of heritage for alternative use is necessarily the best thing to do at any particular point in time, without understanding future use value.

**Mr DEAN** - That is an important point.

## **PUBLIC**

**Prof ADAMS** - The state-wide comment I made earlier, is originally Tasmania was connected by rail. Nearly all settlements were connected by rail. Now, a lot of that infrastructure has gone for development purposes. Many of which probably have created a much higher use value overall. But, the incremental loss of the potential connectivity of rail is a question we have not addressed as a state. Are we willing to trade this off? I am not clear. I would like to think we would not trade it off lightly, that we would trade it off with careful thought and the north east rail line has brought this into sharp relief.

**Mr DEAN** - A good example would be the trams in Hobart and here, the structure of our lines with the foresight now we would say we should never have done that.

**CHAIR** - That is a question?

**Mr DEAN** - Adding to what David is saying, heritage value.

**CHAIR** - We are after evidence from David.

**Mr FARRELL** - David, I want to ask more in relation to the comments you made about the tourist and heritage rail not having the scale here, to be a proper industry group. How does the sector best tackle this? What does it need to do to advance its cause?

**Prof ADAMS** - It would be good to think the sector itself would be able to move in this direction and parts of the sector are, but when you are flat out as a volunteer trying to run a little group, your ability to sit back, think, invest and spend time at these sorts of activities are rather limited. Therefore, it is more likely a public entity such as the state government or the parliament, rather would be the more appropriate entity to look at whether or not this is a sensible way to go, simply on the basis of the government's interest in viable industries.

New South Wales is a very good example where the government, for example, nominates the Chair of the group. The group is then made up of independent directors mostly with business skills, not only heritage skills, well connected into business, philanthropy and the community. They could potentially own some of the assets and when it becomes very sensitive. In the areas of back of house services, marketing and essentially creating what I would describe as a prospectus for the industry. This is what we lack in Tasmania. Is there a prospectus for the heritage industry in Tasmania to help us answer questions, that at the moment are being relegated to problematic binary discussions of bike versus rail? We need to lift our strategic thinking and views about the future of the region and the state.

**Mr FARRELL** - The north-east line has been identified by other groups for re-use, but there are other former railway lines, particularly one in the south and one in the far north-west, where the rail has been lifted and the corridor is still there. Smithton to Marrawah, for example, and Brighton to Kempton, there is still the formation of the line. There will be land tenure issues, but do you have any thoughts on why those lines have not been repurposed for recreational trails?

**Prof. ADAMS** - The supply/demand equation versus the costs of setting up bike trails. It is a limited market and at some point, Tasmania, will reach those limits. They are all examples, where the conversation should always have been; if we keep trading each one off one at a time for particular alternative use value, do we lose something about Tasmania and its past and what its

## PUBLIC

future could be? It is not about preserving every line or every piece of heritage, it is about a considered view of the future of what could be a quite significant industry.

**Mr FARRELL** - How do you have, particularly, organisations like TasRail, to notice this? When the state government took TasRail back over and they put their board and their management, that has recently changed, the aim was very clearly stated that they wanted to maintain the profitable lines - Boyer to Burnie - and get rid of all the rest. How do you, without the support of the current owner and manager of many of these sections, work with a group focused on the economic bottom line?

**Prof ADAMS** - The primary instrument of any parliament is legislation. At the moment, if I was in TasRail, I would have a similar view. The legislation in both the enabling and the substantive provisions do not encourage TasRail to think differently. If TasRail had a mandate through the parliament to think about its connection and support for heritage and associated economic opportunities, then TasRail would do that. I am making a very simple observation that much of the legislation of the parliament in many areas, including land use, does not necessarily encourage a deep understanding and value of heritage, when land use decisions are made.

Again, various members of councils would understand, as one of a large number of planning authorities in Tasmania, the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act itself could perhaps be improved to give more focus on the importance of land use, as it relates to heritage value. I am cautious not to critique organisations that do not think about heritage, when they do not have a clear mandate from the parliament to do so. If they are in the private sector, then they may not have sufficient profit/loss incentive to do so.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is a fair comment with regard to TasRail. Maybe fleshing out a bit more about the governance arrangement. Here we have a number of various groups around Tasmania that all have a strong interest in heritage rail. Some of them own something, some of them don't necessarily own any goods and chattels, so how do you suggest we bring those groups together and still keep their identity but have that overarching focus?

You have touched on a little bit about the marketing and some of those more high-level governance arrangements and you said to have an independent chair appointed by the parliament and go from there.

Generally bringing them together, David, do you have some more thoughts about that?

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

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

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you. That is more clarification in my mind about how we might start a conversation like that and this committee is a good place to start.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr DEAN** - My question was along those line about the comment David made in relation to community ownership and maintaining a vibrancy and so on as to how best to get around that and how best to do that, and getting the people in. I don't know whether you want to expand anymore on that point. It is an important area that we have missed in this whole thing.

**Prof ADAMS** - The only other observation I would make is that local government sits at the crossroads of relevance of the future in Tasmania. If local government was to look at where it might create value in its local communities and its relationship to the heritage assets that are in every local council area in Tasmania, this would seem an important part of the conversation.

Some councils such as Launceston are heavily invested and other councils have very little investment, again, in part because there aren't a lot of incentives in the Local Government Act for investment in this area. Given its connection to population retention, skills, jobs and enterprise that would seem to be a really important future role for local councils. How do you retain people in your community, how do you attract enterprise into the community? It would seem to me that the concept of heritage assets is an important part.

**Mr DEAN** - Another question arising from that, and I am not asking you to criticise councils at all. My question is that we have both, in this instance, the City of Launceston council and the Scottsdale Council with significant roles to play in this whole area, as to whether those councils ought to be doing more in relation to the identification of the value of this whole area in relation to its heritage, et cetera?

We seem to have one council going down the path of one thing and the other council, at this stage, that really is saying that they virtually want to stay out of it. That is virtually what Launceston has said. Do you see that there is a stronger role that the councils ought to be playing in this event?

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

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

**Mr DEAN** - Thanks for that, David, a very good point.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for coming in. Were you going to provide us a couple of your notes? Were you able to provide that or did you want to retract some of it?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Unless you put it all on the *Hansard*, David, which you may have done.

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - You may not wish to because we do have *Hansard*.

**Prof ADAMS** - If you are happy, I'll tidy them up and send them to you.

**CHAIR** - That would be very useful, thank you very much for that.

**Prof ADAMS** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## **PUBLIC**

DISCUSSION WITH **Mr GRANT CRAIG**, FEDERATION OF RAIL ORGANISATIONS, NEW ZEALAND, VIA TELEPHONE.

**Mr CHRIS MARTIN**, ASSOCIATION OF TOURIST AND HERITAGE RAIL AUS INC, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. You may be aware this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege and I remind you that any comments you make outside may not be granted such privilege. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. If you would like to start, Chris, and perhaps Grant will make some comments.

**Mr MARTIN** - To start with, Grant is joining us on the phone today. Grant is the President of the Federation of Rail Organisations in New Zealand that represents 72 heritage and tourist railways and trams in New Zealand which is close to what we have here in Australia. We have about 74 that the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator presently administers. Grant is the Operations Manager for Dunedin scenic rail, worked with Chris Griffin and was approached back in 2016 Chris to come to Tasmania, tell us about operating railways and how difficult it might be for us Taswegians who might want to run a long railway in the north-east.

I have an email Grant sent to Chris Griffin. One of the key points he mentions here is that New Zealand hasn't pulled up any railway tracks to build bike paths. The bike paths have always come after the question of whether the rail is finished and removed. The bike paths have always come at that point. In New Zealand, they are clever enough to hang on to their easements and their corridors; they were not sold off as soon as the railway tracks were pulled up. At a later stage, Grant will go into the background of the Dunedin scenic rail which, as you probably heard this morning from Chris Griffin, is owned by Dunedin Council. It runs for 113 kilometres.

I am Chairman of the Association of Tourist & Heritage Rail Australia. I am now the Vice Chairman for the Tasmanian Association of Tourist Railways as well. I have submitted a rather long document that includes Bob Vanselow's report on the north-east line. Included with that was a copy of Bob Vanselow's CV. Unfortunately, Bob is no longer with us. That was very sad. As Bob isn't able to continue the work, I have taken that on as a civil and structural engineer. I will table my CV. You will have heard from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, as Rosemary pointed out, that they have their engineers they will call on to assess the line. We had Bob Vanselow do an assessment of the line. He presented it at some of the community meetings, which some of you may have attended. Bob did an incredibly thorough job, within the week he spent here, of assessing the line for its full length. I will pass out a few copies of these, since we don't have a data projector.

**CHAIR** - It means we can table that?

**Mr MARTIN** - Yes, that is being tabled. It has been emailed to you. I have one more copy there for anyone that wishes it. In the document I presented as part of my submission, many pages include many photos of the corridor and the railway track. Those photos are cross-referenced onto a much larger spreadsheet I haven't copied but I will table this for you and you have the electronic versions as well. We have broken down each of the track segments into lengths. Bob then looked at what radius curvature each section had and the length of the tangent

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

tracks. A tangent track is the straight piece of track that joins the curves together. He has then done some statistical work looking at, for example, stage 4, which is the Lilydale to Wyena section. You can see he has photos of these sections and he has measured the number of steel sleepers in those segments of track, then he has used the number of steel sleepers in a 100-metre radius curve. Most of them have 100 per cent steel sleepers. He has then used that for any other 100-metre radius curves in the sections that he hasn't fully assessed. Do you have those, Rosemary?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr MARTIN** - This is one of the other worksheets.

**Mr DEAN** - That is another document separate to what we have, Chris.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Looking at what we have here, it says, 'repairs, repairs', and, 'it looks okay'. Could you expand on what that means?

**Mr MARTIN** - The visible appearance is that it looks okay but you might get in there and do a second inspection.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - This is only visible. He has just looked at it. He hasn't -

**Mr MARTIN** - No, he hasn't drilled holes. I don't think we're allowed to drill holes and so on.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - No, it is just a look.

**Mr MARTIN** - Yes.

The document you have includes the summary of each of the stages. It has the track locations in terms of its length from Coldwater Creek junction, the stage in lengths so that we all know exactly what we're talking about in terms of lengths, and then the number of main line sleeper positions and the number of steel sleepers. You can see Coldwater Creek junction, stage 3, for example, has 50.1 per cent steel and the Karoola to Lilydale Falls section has the least amount at 24.3 per cent. The segment Eamonn Seddon has done a report on in terms of tourism viability, from Lilydale to Wyena, has about 30 per cent steel sleepers. This track is a relatively modern line in terms of it having steel sleepers. I am sure the Derwent Valley people would love to have that many steel sleepers in their line. For those who don't know, Dunedin scenic rail and KiwiRail are all three-foot-six as well, the same as Tasmania.

That first sheet gives you a summary of the number of steel sleepers. The last column is the one that really comes to the crux of whether this line is achievable with a volunteer base group, which is really the opportunity there at the moment. I fully condone and support David in the view that we should be looking at this as a Tasmania-wide picture; how do we optimise the benefit of tourist rail for Tasmania? Without the north-east issues that have come through, perhaps we wouldn't be having a mandate to have that conversation. I hope that the hearing does make recommendations in that direction that come to fruition. Having some professional paid staff to deal with all of the things that volunteers find difficult would make the whole sector hum

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**



## **PUBLIC**

and create a lot more benefit for Tasmania, particularly, as we're looking the tourism growth that Tasmania is facing from 1 million to 1.5 million people. What are we going to with those people that is low impact, that has a good yield in terms of benefit to our communities?

Back to the last column - 'timbers to replace', and as I mentioned Lilydale Falls or Lilydale to Wyena is the key segment of the line which Eamonn and I believe is the most marketable in terms of a stand-alone tourist attraction. Please, if you haven't read Eamonn's report, do make sure you read it and I'd implore you to get Eamonn to come along and have a talk to his report too. Chris Le Marshall has also done a similar assessment and should be consulted as well as the government-paid consultant who investigated the line.

Bob did a lot of this assessment with Wayne Vin (TBC) as well and the key number there is 603 sleepers to replace from Lilydale Falls through to Wyena. That's not a huge number, considering that we're looking with this assessment at the operation of the railcar. We are not talking about a freight train or a log train, this is a lightweight railcar so the replacement of 603 sleepers; recently at Sheffield, my brother and I and five members from the North East Railway group came and in two days we replaced 300. We are talking about chickenfeed in the grand scheme of getting a line operational for the rail car.

I understand that the North East Railway group initially want to get that railcar going, similar to what the Yarra Valley Railway has done. They restored part of their track just so they could get the railcar going. They pulled that section of track up and they're re-laying it with steel sleepers and new rail so that it goes up to the heavier rail capabilities for larger locomotives and larger trains. Getting something moving and getting the community on board was imperative for the Yarra Valley Railway, as I believe it is for this operation.

With 603 sleepers from Lilydale Falls to Wyena, to get that line operational in terms of sleepers it's not a big ask.

The next page I've got there is the level crossing summary that Bob Vanselow prepared. I might add for the North East Railway group, I understand their plans are to establish a base initially at Karoola once the bridge is repaired, and then establish their base at Turners Marsh. From Turners Marsh to Lilydale is just a transfer train which can rely on flagmen just to get the train across in the morning and return it at night. At slow speeds they don't have to spend a lot of money to get that section operating.

You will see on that summary page that Stage 1, which is Karoola to Lilydale Falls, that only has the 24.3 per cent of steel sleepers. It's only 10 kilometres long and it needs about 515 sleepers to get that passable for the railcar.

**Mr DEAN** - What do you mean by railcar?

**Mr MARTIN** - The DP railcar, 30 to 40 passengers shuttling the shuttle service.

Firstly, if you look at Stage 1 which is Karoola to Lilydale Falls, in terms of rail crossings you can see there, there are seven active crossings that would need protection if you were going to operate on that as a shuttle service, which is what the current Government direction would have us do, you would have seven active rail crossings there.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

In Stage 2, Turners Marsh to Karoola station, the only part of the line which is operable under the current Government direction, there are no active crossings but a number of passive crossings to be dealt with there, however, the Eamonn Seddon's report deals primarily with stage 4.

We are only talking about three active level crossings that are required to have bell blocks and so forth installed which I understand is a reasonable cost to implement. The LNER crew have electricians who have looked at solutions which are in the order of \$20 000 per crossing. As Rosemary has mentioned, that does need to be passed by the regulator and approved before we can use figures like that. I understand the technology is there to make some concessions though.

The other A3 page is all of the structures and primarily all of the structures have steel girders, concrete abutments apart from the bridge which is past the Wyena stage we have identified, stage 4, and can be restored relatively cheaply.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - When you say 'relatively cheaply', what are you talking about?

**Mr MARTIN** - We are not talking about a new bridge. We are talking about transom timbers or concrete transoms installed on top of the bridge. How many bridges have you got, Grant, in 113 kilometres?

**Mr CRAIG** - Twenty. One of them was the biggest wired up in the southern hemisphere.

**Mr MARTIN** - How many metres is that one?

**Mr CRAIG** - It is about 500 metres long (indistinct) cover to go in.

**Mr MARTIN** - That is a decent length. Bob did an assessment of the tunnel. He couldn't see any real issues in terms of train operations through the tunnel. There were no rivers running through there at the time. There was water running but he didn't see that as being a big problem. I walked that section with him and the sleepers were generally in a good condition because they were constantly wet.

I would like to table a copy of the report on the value of heritage railways which the English parliament undertook. There is plenty of good evidence in terms of recognition of the value that tourist and heritage rail has to its regional areas. They have 108 railways in the UK and the number of visitors they are carrying is about 10.3 million. To put that into perspective, in Victoria, and Brett Whelan will outline that they are carrying about 1 million passengers in a state that has suburban rail opportunities. It is not about people wanting to have a train ride; they want to have a heritage train ride.

Here in Tasmania we are probably carrying maybe 50 000 or 60 000 if you are counting the West Coast Wilderness Railway and the Don Railway, the primary carriers.

The 2011 figures show the earnings in the UK were £92 million out of the heritage rail sector and the paid staff out of 108 tourist and heritage railways was 3713. We are talking about big bikkies if you get the sector operating well. I am happy to table that one.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - Can we hear from, Grant, his numbers? What are your numbers over there across the ditch?

**Mr CRAIG** - We carry over 80 000 to 90 000 passengers a year, 15 000 of those are cruise ship passengers. We had about 120 cruise ships into our port last year and the last one was last Friday, mainly full of Australians now. They used to be Americans but now they are coming down to Hobart, then Milford Sound and Dunedin. They are a big part of our market.

Dunedin Railway operates 64 kilometres of railway track. It used to be part of the old Otago line which used to be 150 kilometres long. From the end of our line, that little (indistinct) through the climbers down the rail trail.

It was started by volunteers by a heritage organisation. When the line was closed by the government, the volunteers persuaded the city council to purchase the line. As it was council-owned they wanted it run as a business so they hold a 72 per cent share in the company and 28 per cent is held by the original organisation that started the line. Dunedin is about the same size as Launceston, by the sound of it, and we are what they call a council-controlled organisation as part of a number of companies the city council owns including electricity, [inaudible 12.45.23], forestry. We are looking at the big picture of being an organisation or an interest for people to come to Dunedin to [inaudible 12.45.35] an attraction. They don't expect us to make a fortune; any money we make we put back into the company but they understand that in the big picture of tourism, it's another popular attraction to bring people to Dunedin.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What role does your government have in the rail in your operation? Do they have any role? I know you have a different system over there.

**Mr CRAIG** - No. It is very similar to TasRail. Over here we have a lot of [similarities?] between New Zealand and Tasmania. We originally sent locos from here to Tasmania in the 1920s or 1930s. TasRail was owned by Tranz Rail [???] half and [inaudible 12.46.34] were tied up together and so it was linked.

We have one government-owned railway called KiwiRail and they run the national network. Dunedin Railways has rights over some of our tracks where they run, but it is mainly, just like TasRail, a big government-owned railway business.

Most of our rail trails now are on railway lines that are closed [inaudible 12.47.09] the infrastructure then. What has turned out to be really popular in New Zealand with what railway lines are still there are rail bikes. There are two sorts, like golf carts with rail wheels on that can travel over the railway tracks, or cycling rail carts, which are pedalled like a normal bike. I consider it to be a perfect example of what you can do in Tasmania on the lines there: run your heavy transport trains with your [inaudible 12.47.43] and have your rail bikes and rail carts operating around those services. It seems like a prime example for that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You have not had a chance to come to Tasmania to have a look at what we have on offer?

**Mr GRANT** - No. I have read up a lot about it but I haven't had the privilege of coming there.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - It's never too late.

**Mr CRAIG** - It sounds very similar to New Zealand.

**Mr DEAN** - Were you here when Chris Griffin was here?

**Mr MARTIN** - No.

**Mr DEAN** - Okay. I will put this to you and see what you have to say on this: It has been suggested that one won't be able to economically exist without the other; in other words, a heritage rail and the rail trail and that you need both of them. Do you have a view on that? I'll throw in also the position of the Government, which you are aware of, that from Turners Marsh to Lilydale it would be heritage rail and from there on to Scottsdale would be a rail trail. What is your position on that? Could a heritage rail work in that sort of situation, in your mind?

**Mr CRAIG** - Heritage rail does work. In New Zealand hings have been having a bit of a [inaudible 12.49.11] on cycleways and making cycleways, but they know the figures they have figures for people who are using the rail trails. You have a market there, especially with trains and rail cars we are talking about, you're getting a good cross-section of people that you can utilise to get onto those services. A lot of our people who travel are older people who have the money to be able to get around but they haven't got the physical means. Somebody has to be able to cycle. Railways is a great way to get the people around, especially older people because you can sit in the carriages, they all have toilets, and a restaurant where they serve food and stuff on the train. So it is slightly different market but a bigger market that uses heavy trains rather than cycling.

**Mr MARTIN** - My thoughts on that one, Ivan. Eamonn has written a report and reviewed the attractions that are available on that corridor. He has looked at Lilydale being the start of the operations and then going through past the Lilydale Falls, the tunnel, and the Denison Gorge and then through to Wyena, where you could potentially have a bus connection through to Bridestowe or Scottsdale. The idea of the rail bikes, et cetera, is something that LNER have promoted for Scottsdale in the short term until we can see if the business model stacks up and the development of opening, and so forth. That needs to happen before you would look at any further extensions.

In terms of bike trails co-existing with railways, it is possibly going to be difficult through that section because you are talking about precipitous gorges and the space on the corridor is limited even through the tunnel, for example. I guess the bike trail could go up on the road and then rejoin at later stages, and you would have to look at all those pinch points and how you would develop a cycleway alongside it. Grant mentioned there are some in New Zealand where they have the bikeway on the track. Grant, is that correct?

**Mr CRAIG** - Not that I can think of. We have talked about it but I think the safety issues of having a 300 tonne train and a cyclist using the same railway line puts off the government agency, for some reason.

**Mr MARTIN** - I would think that would be something the regulator might have some thoughts about, Rosemary. They would have to have enough separation in terms of where the

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

bike track was. As I said, I haven't looked specifically at how you can create that for the entire corridor.

**Mr DEAN** - I think Chris meant more one section for heritage rail and another section for a rail trail. I think that was what he was saying. He commented on the joint use not being something that could occur.

My next question comes from that. Would the situation of heritage rail from Lilydale to Wyena work, with Lilydale as a starting destination?

**Mr MARTIN** - In terms of optimising the economic benefits for a community, having people park their cars at Lilydale to catch a train, which is a standalone attraction, is going to have far more benefit to Lilydale than having them go there from Turners Marsh, for example, because they will park at Turners Marsh, closer to Launceston. The train shuttling, as the Government currently proposes where this development should go, won't see as much benefit to Lilydale.

**Mr DEAN** - If it came to a position of Turners Marsh to Lilydale, or Lilydale to Wyena and then Wyena to Scottsdale as a rail trail, how would you see that?

**Mr MARTIN** - The train has capabilities to transport people on their bikes to the railhead. I know Brett Whelan will talk about that when you visit the Yarra Valley Railway. They have the same interface issues with rail trails. I believe they are working quite harmoniously with them.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Grant, did you want to make comment around that proposal?

**Mr CRAIG** - Certainly, we know when you are part of a line, the remains of our line as a now rail trail, which is New Zealand's most popular rail trail in Otago Central, we do; we cart people from Dunedin on their bikes and we cart bikes through Middlemarch as part of the rail trail.

**Mr MARTIN** - What sort of percentage, are you able to say, may I ask?

**Mr CRAIG** - About 10 per cent I suppose of people doing those trips doing the rail trail and then using the train.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Chris, we heard this morning from Chris Griffin that he did not see Wyena as being a destination at all. He felt that it would not engage anyone to get off at Wyena, or what would you do when you got there. For anyone who knows Wyena, it is a very small place. I understand your desire to have the tunnel and the Denison Gorge experience, but is Wyena the best spot if you are looking at a destination?

**Mr MARTIN** - If we are looking at a destination, I would say Scottsdale, but the reality of getting something going and profitable, so you can then leapfrog onto the next stage, is to take in the scenic activities and link it with bus tours. A bit like the West Coast Wilderness Railway. Most passengers, or a lot of them, will travel from Strahan to Queenstown. These days they have the return journeys, but in the earlier days when they were carrying upwards of 60 000 passengers a year, they were busing them back. The opportunity, of course, if you can do bus connections, you can then go to Scottsdale or Wyena and offer additional tourism packages.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

If you have that many people being delivered to Wyena, it could be a greenfield site to create something. The Puffing Billy Railway is spending in the vicinity of \$5 million, renovating tourist facilities at Lakeside. Then Lakeside becomes another destination starting point, because their line from Lakeside to Gembrook, historically, was under-utilised but they are now finding the first section of their line does get capacity. Their method of breaking the line experiences was to make Lakeside a more prominent tourist facility.

**Ms RATTRAY** - There is no issue with finding some sort of stopping or returning point at Wyena and then you head back.

**Mr MARTIN** - There will be people who will do the full train journey. In an ideal world, there may also be opportunities for packaging where you would have a bus load of passengers or several bus loads, depending on how many you can encourage, doing the tourist activities and then meeting the train at Wyena and then, the same, the people from the train going onto the bus and going back around the other way.

The stage we are talking about 30 kilometres from Lilydale Falls to Wyena's 14.5 kilometres, so it is something they would do within an hour's journey, easily, with a stop off at Lilydale Falls and a bit of interpretation at the tunnel and the Denison Gorge, of course. There are waterfalls up in the Denison Gorge they could walk into and then jump back on the train and onto Wyena.

**Mr DEAN** - Wyena to Scottsdale, what is the distance there?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Too far for me to walk.

**Mr FARRELL** - Twenty-one kilometres.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes, about 20 kilometres.

**Mr MARTIN** - Wyena to Scottsdale, if you look on this summary page, is 25.3 kilometres.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is not a bad guess for a girl who doesn't know her measurements.

**Mr MARTIN** - There are a few bends to consider.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks, Chris.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - We heard earlier it's an eight-hour return trip to Scottsdale.

**Mr MARTIN** - If you left from Launceston.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - What would it be from where we are talking about?

**Mr MARTIN** - Lilydale to Wyena was about 14 kilometres in terms of a stage length. You could do that in half an hour if you had to, but you would be doing the stops on the way and giving people the experience of the countryside and the attractions there.

## **PUBLIC**

You might end up with a program that's a little bit longer or the train could operate as a shuttle service and people hop off, go to Lilydale Falls and catch the next one back. It is difficult to know exactly how you would package it given those circumstances. It all depends on patronage and what the visitor wants. You could get a couple of rail cars and be shuttling them and passing at Lebrina, for example, there are lots of opportunities with rail.

**Mr DEAN** - Have you had any discussions with the rail trail group? Sadly, we have this division causing some issues we would rather not see. Have you had any discussions?

**Mr MARTIN** - I have attended meetings at Dorset Council. They were slightly disparaging of the concept and very locked on the path they had already established.

In terms of the rail trail group, is there a particular chairperson we should be talking to?

**Mr DEAN** - Have you discussed with the Scottsdale Council the concept of Lilydale to Wyena? Has this been openly discussed with the council or other groups?

**Mr MARTIN** - That would have raised during the meeting. I cannot recall how long ago, six to eight months and at the time, they were very focused on only the rail trail.

**Mr DEAN** - It has been raised?

**Mr MARTIN** - It has certainly been raised, yes. They would have copies of Eamonn Sedden's report, which looks at that specifically.

**Mr DEAN** - Right, thank you.

**Mr FARRELL** - Chris, how do you see this going? Obviously, there are issues around you working with the local government sector. Do you believe it should be a state government operated process from now on? I am wondering how you see it as one of the players. How to bring people together and start having the conversation about what is the best plan with the most benefit to a valuable piece of infrastructure you want to see utilised. I am sure there is a way forward, with all the groups coming together. Have you any preference or how you would see this progressing.

**Mr MARTIN** - That is a difficult question in terms of what actually is the product we have. At the moment, it is only Turners Marsh to Lilydale. We are suggesting the best tourist product for the district is going to be Lilydale to Wyena, with opportunities for expansion in either direction once that product is actually proven.

There is the strategic infrastructure corridor bill which provides one avenue for getting access to the track, which will then require planning approval for the bike track to be put into place before they could start any work on the bike trail.

If the government was to turn around and say let's hang onto that asset for 10 years, we will actually give you all of the steel railway sleepers they have pulled out of the main line network, which hopefully are still left in the yard - I understand TasRail had given some assurances none of the good steel sleepers would go for scrap - that makes this project so much more viable, if you

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

have a good supply of 30 000 steel sleepers, to progressively replace into the railway line. It takes out the maintenance load into the future significantly.

**Mr FARRELL** - There seems to be difficulty on different levels. It is a tourism project, a community development project, an infrastructure issue. Do you see this requiring some stronger input from state government bodies?

**Mr MARTIN** - Certainly. Tourist rail, as you are probably quite aware, is quite a complicated project to make happen. The more support you can get, particularly from government, the better. There are plenty of examples out there where it has been handed over to volunteer groups and they have picked up the ball and run with it. The opportunities are many and varied.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have a question, Grant, in regard to the governance arrangements for the rail entities in New Zealand. It was suggested in Tasmania we have 17 groups.

**Mr MARTIN** - Eight tourist railways.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Eight tourist railways and we need to have a coordinated approach, particularly around marketing and the higher level of governance arrangements. Do you have such a model in your country?

**Mr GRANT** - No, we are already separated here. The Dunedin railway is part of the Dunedin City Council. Most of the other tourist railways are private railways that are bought or rebuilt the railway lines they operate on. We are not very coordinated over here, either, really.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Do you have general conversations about what you might do to advance heritage rail? I know New Zealand are pretty good at that.

**Mr CRAIG** - That is what FRONZ is, we represent 72 members. We have conferences every year that to discuss projects and the need to work closely, but don't get coordination for the government. We have tried to get that from the government but the real priorities seem to be housing and terrorism at the moment, as you can probably understand.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes, we understand completely and that would be high on their agenda.

**Mr CRAIG** - New Zealand is very much relying on tourism at the moment, and dairy - I should say, my sister is very good at producing cows. Tourism is huge in New Zealand. They are starting to realise railways are part of that. People like travelling on trains. Trains can take a really good cross-section of the people who come to New Zealand. A lot of it might be the rail consumer on the heritage railway but it is the scenery they have come to see. They are not railway enthusiasts. Most people on our trains are there to look at the scenery and it is a safe, comfortable way of doing that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks very much, Grant. Chris, in your submission you noted the recent announcement that Launceston City Council has been slow in coming to the party. You didn't say it that way, I did. They have come on board and they have supported the line to Wyena within their municipal boundary. If that is the case, the Launceston City Council could apply for the

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**



## **PUBLIC**

corridor licence, you could reach Wyena and it doesn't interfere with the Dorset boundary. Has that been discussed within your group?

**Mr MARTIN** - It has certainly been talked about. No formal application has been made to the Launceston Council, to my knowledge. We have had a couple of meetings with Launceston Council. Brett Whelan also presented to the council. Once the announcement has been made that the government was looking at giving the rail opportunity to Lilydale or Lilydale Falls, a lot of hope was put on the Legislative Council's hearing in terms of what you are doing to provide some further direction on opportunities and which way that might progress.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We are looking for the presenters to give us some direction as well.

**CHAIR** - The council have provided us with a submission.

**Mr DEAN** - Grant was saying that this committee has a tough position looking at all the evidence to come up with a reasonable position in our recommendations. It may be to support what the Government has already put up. It is not necessarily that the Government has to take any notice of what we put forward.

Thank you for mentioning the council, Tania. A marketable position would simply be to put in a rail trail from Launceston to Lilydale, then the heritage rail concept if that could work from there to Wyena, then do whatever people want, such as put their bike on the train, and then, again, rail trail from Wyena through to Scottsdale. You have both ends with the heritage rail in between. Has that concept been looked at and would that be marketable?

**Mr MARTIN** - I understand there are some significant issues in terms of a bike path from Launceston to Lilydale. TasRail will not allow it to occur on their corridor out to Coldwater Creek. Once you get to Coldwater Creek, you have a reasonable distance. It is 8.9 kilometres to Turners Marsh. That section of line would stay intact or be pulled up, but it wouldn't be bike path because you can't get to it. In order for the bike path to be developed, it would have to be done so on the road corridors, potentially. If they are going to do that, why not stick on the road corridor and run in parallel?

**Mr DEAN** - The reason for that is the terrain. I understand what the rail trail people are saying. In following a rail corridor there are no steep hills and all the rest. Some of us quite like that in our rides, perhaps families wouldn't.

**Mr MARTIN** - One of the questions I continually ask in this debate is, if Pacific National hadn't booted heritage rail off its network - at the time they had real difficulties keeping their freight trains on the tracks and, since then, TasRail has spent a small fortune on upgrading its infrastructure - and if passenger rail services were still in place on the main line network today, would we be in such rush to disconnect our regional areas that have a rail connection?

Ten years have passed since that occurred and it only takes a flick of a switch for main line rail activity to occur again. I am aware that the Don Railway is working to get their rolling stock accredited so they can return to the main line network. I understand the new management of TasRail is more open to that than Damien White was. I think he took a very risk-averse approach of not wanting passengers on the network. Again, it comes back to what the government mandate

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

for TasRail is. It's to make a profit, and they don't want the hindrance of passengers being tied up in a siding waiting for a freight train that's had a problem.

**Mr DEAN** - Thanks for that, Chris.

**Mr CRAIG** - It sounds so much like New Zealand. The thing I question is rail safety. In New Zealand, the last person who died on a passenger train was in 1993. Fifteen thousand people have died on the roads in that time. Rail is very safe. I can't see why a people would need to be risk-averse towards rail.

**Mr MARTIN** - I've had that discussion with our regulator, Grant, that our passengers are at more risk driving to our sites than they are in catching the train when they get there.

**Mr CRAIG** - That's right.

**Mr MARTIN** - As a society, we don't understand risk when it comes to what's acceptable.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - There are eight tourist rails operating.

**Mr MARTIN** - Yes, that's correct.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Is that counting Ida Bay?

**Mr MARTIN** - It would have been counting Ida Bay, yes. Ida Bay is non-operational at the moment. When you look at the actual railways that could work together in terms of a joint approach, I would suggest that it's the main line capable groups such as the Don Railway Transport Museum, Derwent Valley Railway and the West Coast Wilderness Railway. Let's not forget that there are potential opportunities to use some of or even spread their capabilities across the state. Instead of the marketing manager for Tasmania's railways having to live in Queenstown, they could live anywhere. For example, maintenance could be centralised at the Don River Railway, which has the best maintenance facilities in the southern hemisphere for a tourist and heritage railway.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - If the heritage rail was put in place, who do you think should be the owner in the long-term? We had one witness say the state government should be the owner.

**Mr MARTIN** - Is the owner of a collective that's looking after main line activities, or is it -

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - This is the rail from Lilydale to Scottsdale or Launceston to Scottsdale.

**Mr MARTIN** - That is an easy way out for a volunteer group. If the government was to look after it and maintain it, the volunteer group then runs the trains. It makes it more manageable, but volunteers do that in other railways.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - The government owns -

**Mr MARTIN** - The government will still own it. It will still be the government corridor. It's whether they take over the maintenance as part of that.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - That would be the preferred position, would it?

**Mr CRAIG** - The government does not want to relinquish usually the rail corridor itself.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is the case here.

**Mr DEAN** - What was that?

**CHAIR** - The Government does not want to relinquish the rail corridor.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They are not relinquishing the corridor.

**Mr MARTIN** - And I would expect they would still have the ownership of the track. It is the question of whether they would put anything towards maintenance and whether they would recognise TasRail providing for example all of their redundant steel sleepers, to go to another state-owned asset. It makes a lot of sense to me.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Grant. Is there any last comment you would like to make?

**Mr CRAIG** - Just have a look at the Dunedin railway website and see what we do and how we do it. The other one for rail biking is called Forgotten World, in the middle of the North Island. That is another interesting one to have a look at, biking and rail cart. That is hugely popular. So have a look at those two sites. When you are over in New Zealand come and have a ride.

**Mr DEAN** - The rail cart has been suggested could be another experience on the rail line, if it was retained. Not just getting into a train but for exercise. It provides physical activity. Is that a possibility?

**Mr MARTIN** - That has been flagged in some of LNER's discussions and maybe even in Eamonn's report. I am not 100 per cent certain of that. Eamonn's report should be taken as an input into a business plan. It is not the actual business plan for the group. You cannot have business plan if you do not have a railway.

**Mr DEAN** - That would be a possibility on the north-east line?

**Mr MARTIN** - I may have mentioned that coming out of Scottsdale, it would be logical to establish a hub for the rail bikes to actually operate from Scottsdale coming back down and then back up to Scottsdale. That would immediately give some use to the line, while its future in terms of a heavier rail option was being reviewed.

**Mr DEAN** - It seems to me there is a real potential for that.

**Mr CRAIG** - You do not have to maintain it to as high a standard as you do for a heavy train.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CRAIG/MARTIN)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr MARTIN** - I might add that Derwent Valley railway has two locations where rail bikes are being utilised already and very successfully. It provides -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Are they electric?

**Mr FARRELL** - No, you pedal.

**Mr MARTIN** - much needed income to the hosts who actually accompany the people on their rail bike experience.

**Mr DEAN** - Seems to me to be a great business.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Grant. We appreciate it and if we do manage to get over there I am sure we will catch up with you.

Thank you very much, Chris, and for all the documents you tabled and the submission I was going through and lots of photos. I found it very interesting.

**Mr FARRELL** - It was nice to hear someone come and say well, I am an engineer.

**Mr MARTIN** - Yes, I'm going to be proud of that.

**CHAIR** - It was really good and we appreciate you coming.

**DISCUSSION CONCLUDED, WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## **PUBLIC**

### **Mr PAUL CABALZAR, WAS RECALLED AND WAS RE-EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** - You have been here before. You know the system and that what you say is protected by parliamentary privilege. I am just reminding you of that; anything you say outside may not be. I will quickly go around; I am sure you will remember. We have Craig Farrell, Tania Rattray, Jane Howlett, Rosemary Armitage, Robert Armstrong, Ivan Dean, Julie over in the back with *Hansard* and we have Natasha. If you just want to make some comments and then members can ask some questions.

**Mr CABALZAR** - You do not know where to start really do you? The stuff you are getting is not all, like I said last time I was here, it is not always the truth. It is just distorted beyond belief.

It is a fairly simple matter. There is a railway line there and we want to resurrect it, get it back in working order and put a train on it. But it just seems to be a problem with a lot of people who do not want it that way. Like in today's paper, that is just wrong and it is wrong and it should not be in print. The people in the public see that they have \$3 million and what is it, 700 000 working hours and they have done 4 kilometres. It puts us in a terrible light. It is 60 kilometres of track and we are saying we can fix it in a reasonable period of a couple of years and do some massive bridges and massive things and that is all they could do, well dear, oh dear. We have expertise, ex-rail and still some rail employees that do this, they do 100 sleepers in a day. I feel for you trying to work out a path through all this stuff, what they have been feeding you. They contradict it all the time.

**CHAIR** - I think the Victorian one though, they had to rebuild from scratch because the bushfire went through so everything had to be started again.

**Mr CABALZAR** - We have started off. The whole thing for us was that we kept the railway line for the people of the north-east who own the land that it goes through. They inherited the land from their forebears as a rail corridor. The people who bought properties around it since, bought it knowing it was rail corridor. They understand and don't mind a train going up and down it. But to have pushbikes, motorbikes, horses and backpackers and camping overnight and people lighting little fires to cook their food isn't acceptable to them.

We have lost sight of what this is all about. That's how it started with us and then the rail fellows got into it and then how could they argue with the government? What we are going to do with all this without a train, so that's why I bought the two train carriages and said, 'Well, there you go, they have a chance, they've got this'.

Incidentally we were working away at that. The top of it is all painted, the new windows are in and finished. We are down to the middle line now and that is about to be done. The bottom half is going to be painted red. The paint has arrived - special paint - and the man is on the inside doing the woodwork now, in Tasmanian timber again. We are now into the mechanical side of things - the axles - and I'm looking into buying four new wheels for the drive wheels. They come out of Africa, so part of that is underway.

The other one - Neil Spune (TBC) was here a minute ago - he tells me I loaned him the bogies out of that train to help them when they broke one a few months back. He said it would be

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

six weeks. That is now nine months ago. He just informs in the foyer that it is ready to come back. I don't know how many good bits are left in it but that is beside the point. We are progressing and it's all to the proper standards.

I heard yesterday that Peter Clements gave evidence about different things and I picked up on that. He came to a Lilydale meeting and I thought, 'I have to go and meet the rail regulator', and I went there to meet him at the Providence Vineyard. He went to the train first to look at the bogies and the axles and I said, 'How do we get the crack testing done that has to be done?' and he said, 'Oh, I don't know, you'd have to see'. And I thought, 'What's going on here?'. He's a rail safety officer. He's not an engineer, I realised after that. How he can say that this is this and that's that.

**CHAIR** - He did say that when he comes he will bring an engineer with him.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes, but he's the one saying the rail is no good and this is no good and you can't do this. Well, he's not in a position; he's not an engineer to do that.

**CHAIR** - No, but he is going to bring an engineer with him when he comes and looks at it.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes, but he made the statement yesterday.

**CHAIR** - He has offered to come with us and have a look.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Wendy gave me some notes. I have already covered it. We shouldn't be moving the railway lines. They said Ivan was talking about bikes to somewhere and somewhere, et cetera. As I understand it, a rail corridor is for insurance purposes. That is why no people are allowed in a rail corridor and never have been. You can't get insurance to do both, so that has created a major problem if we tried to do that. The insurance, as it is, for a train is enough without any further costs and encumbrances. We really need to make up our minds what we're going to have on the line and what we're going to pass.

People continue to talk about Coldwater Creek. I mentioned it last time - Coldwater Creek is just a junction of lines. There is no road to it, there is no footpath to it, there is nothing. I have 2 kilometres of that at the junction and we've just had a fire out there. We fought it for eight days with three tankers, five units and 15 men around the clock to stop it. I lost 250 acres of my property in that fire up there. It is all remote stuff. You can't get there. They had 400 metres of pipe coming down the hill to get to the railway line. They burnt to the railway line in the finish to have a line.

In the long term, when we prove that we can go from Pipers River Road junction, we can put a station there because there is a siding to Scottsdale, and then later on we should be looking at bringing it right into Launceston city so they can get on the train at Inveresk, which was the rail capital of Tasmania in the early days. Peter Gutwein said, 'Oh, you can go down to George Town'. If they are going to bring the cruise ships in there we need to be able to come down at Coldwater Creek and go straight down. We do not have to come into town to do that.

We really need to consider - not namby-pamby or two-bob each way, or bikes here and that there. We need to be a rail corridor and get on with it as a rail corridor and a tourist thing. Sixty kilometres, Mr Farrell will tell you, is a pretty long tourist railway line in Australia, and it would

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

have to be, as we know as Tasmanians, the prettiest in the country. We should not be letting it go regardless of what is said and done.

You might like to pass some of those around. It is a bit of history of what we have put together in the past. It is all going to plan. He made the comment yesterday they tell me about a river running through the tunnel. In some of those pictures you can see there are some white things. Well vandals got in there and smashed the pipes. They are actually 100 ml polypipe.

**CHAIR** - I do not think he said there was a river. I think he might have said there was water in the tunnel.

**A member** - He did say a river.

**CHAIR** - I thought he said there was not a river running through it but there was water.

**A member** - He said there was a river flowing out of it.

**Mr CABALZAR** - It is not the case. There was always water in the tunnel. When the steam trains went through there they took the water out of the wall of the tunnel and topped the water up in the steam trains. They parked in there to do it back in the days when the steam trains were running every day. It is not damaged. Nothing is wrong with it. It is just how it has always been. Evidently it is beautiful water.

Have you got any questions?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks again, Paul, for providing some more updated information.

It has been suggested this morning that the 14-kilometre stretch between Lilydale Falls and Wyena is the most picturesque part, I am not sure that those words were used but that was the impression I got, and that would be a great place to start. If you cannot get the whole lot of the line, that 60 kilometres is a big stretch, what do you think about that 14 kilometres in preference to the 12 kilometres that was originally offered by the Government?

**Mr CABALZAR** - You are saying from Lilydale to Wyena?

**Ms RATTRAY** - From Lilydale Falls through to Wyena, which picks up the tunnel and the Denison Gorge.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Then everybody has to go to Lilydale to get on the train and then you get to Wyena and you turn around and go back. How long is the trip and what can you charge? The whole idea is to do the full thing because it is a perfect day. I have driven the Puffing Billy thing as Ivan has done. It is 25 kilometres and it is \$79 a ticket. I propose that we charge \$100 a day for a round figure to talk about. If you have 80 people at \$100 a day, that is \$8000 a day and you do it two days, Saturday and Sunday, it is \$16 000 every weekend of real money coming in to pay for anything the volunteers don't do.

## **PUBLIC**

If you do so many trips a day, you would have to have cleaners in the train, between each trip. You would have kids there for \$15 or \$18 they are talking about. Then clean it out and put another lot in, up the windows and a lot of work.

Because it is so economical to run, it is \$50 per day for diesel, so you would fill up in town and away to Scottsdale.

**Ms RATTRAY** - When you are talking town, are you meaning Launceston town?

**Mr CABALZAR** - No, sorry.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Where do you propose the start is then, or the finish, whichever way you want to go?

**Mr CABALZAR** - To start with, we would want to start at Pipers River Road.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Turners Marsh. People will still have to drive to there, Paul, to get onto the train, no matter what you do, unless you are going to be able to start in Launceston. We probably still are going to have to drive or have some transport to wherever.

What would be the difference in starting at the Lilydale Falls? You still have to drive to reach the train.

**Mr CABALZAR** - To the Turners Marsh Siding in a vehicle is 12 to 15 minutes from town. There we have 10 acres to have a car park and a museum of old trains. There is a big marshalling area for a huge car park, all flat and on a main road, so that is easy. In time, we would like to build from there back to town.

When you reach Lilydale Falls there is nowhere to turn the train around. There is nowhere to put a turntable in to turn the train around. If we go to Wyena, which the Launceston Mayor wants to do, within his boundary, we would have to put a turntable in to turn the trains around there, but there is room in there to do it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - At Wyena?

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Really, the ideal situation in your view to make a start, would be from the Turners Marsh Siding through to Wyena and all in the Launceston City Council area.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes, that's right.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So you are not heading over into the Dorset municipality for that?

**Mr CABALZAR** - No.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Dorset municipality?



## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - Well, Dorset municipality is the municipality. That is up here, the boundary.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Wouldn't you want it to come down here past the Lavender Farm?

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is obviously the next stage.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Stage 3.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Does that fit in with your long-term plan, or would your long-term plan be to come back from the Turners Marsh Siding back into Launceston before you headed past Wyena into Scottsdale. What would your preference be there?

**Mr CABALZAR** - You lost me a bit there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - If your first stage, stage 1, your preference, is Turners Marsh Siding through to Wyena -

**Mr CABALZAR** - Correct.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What is your stage 2? Do you want to come back into Launceston from Turners Marsh, or do you want to head from Wyena into the Dorset municipality to Scottsdale?

**Mr CABALZAR** - I don't accept we should go to Wyena. We should be going straight to Scottsdale.

**Ms RATTRAY** - All the way?

**Mr CABALZAR** - The locals and all the farmers along the way, would like the train to Scottsdale for tourism reasons. A 2-hour stopover in Scottsdale for meals, a walk around the town, stretch their legs, go to the art shop, buy things, put them on the train and go home. That was one of our criteria for the north-east, it puts something back in, because they have lost so much.

If you don't try, you are not going there, are you? Push a bit harder and, being a businessman, I look at making money and doing it right. I don't want to be here, I've only helped these people get this thing going. I want to be long gone. I'm not running the train and don't want to have anything to do with it, but I'm here and I've spent the money and backed it up. I'm still backing it up and will do till we get it to the point

**Ms RATTRAY** - Speaking about putting your money in and backing up your support, I noticed in your contribution you said you spoke with Peter Gutwein. You let him know you were prepared to fund the repairing of the Karoola Bridge, and he asked you to put this in writing and you did.

**Mr CABALZAR** - I did.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - And yet there has never been any acknowledgement that has actually gone into the Treasury

**Mr CABALZAR** - No. I did. I gave you a copy of the letter when I was here last time.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes, you did. Since you provided the copy of that letter to the committee, and it has been out in the public arena, have you had any response from the Treasury in regard to that?

**Mr CABALZAR** - No. Touching on that, whatever report the Government had done, was a farce. They spent all that money and the fellow they brought down here wasn't a real regulator of rail.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I think he was an engineer, wasn't he, Paul?

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes, but I do not think he was a real rail engineer. He didn't understand. When he was being taken to Hobart, they rang me in the car and said that all the couplings were rusted in the track and they all had to come apart. I said, no, it's not how they're made. All the bolts are interference-fit. I have been supplying the bolts to TasRail for 20 years. I had them made in the foundry and the nuts aren't meant to come undone. When they rattle them up, they go to the point and then they lock and that's it. The only way you get them off is to gas them off, and that has always been the case in Tasmania. It is the only rail in the country done like it, because of our extremes of temperature. You can be minus 6 degrees in the morning in places down the west and it can be 26 degrees in the afternoon with the sun on it.

This is why they had derailments with the Abt. They put the wrong bolts in it, these were second-hand bolts. I had 50 000 bolts made to put the Abt together and they never bought them. This is why it is sad. Some of these jobs are given to the wrong people and the whole thing was done incorrectly. That's another story. It is important to note the fellow who had the job of putting the track down, had only ever pulled up railway lines. He had taken one up in South Australia and put all the nuts in drums because they could undo them over there. When they came over to Tassie they had an old fellow putting a tap and die and cleaning the threads up so they could run the nuts on. Of course, it doesn't work; it's got to be interference-fit. The bolts were coming undone when the train went over and they had 11 derailments with the Abt railway. before it opened.

I went down and said to the manager at the time, who you undoubtedly know - you can't do this; you are going to kill some people and they are Tasmanians and I won't have it'. I got myself into a lot of hot water. Anyhow, the engineers came forward and said - he's quite right. The Institution of Engineers Australia said, 'You keep going and you hire the solicitors and barristers you want to get this across'. We would have had severe troubles with that railway line.

When Federal bought it, I rang them up and said you need to put the proper bolts in it. It's \$100 000 and short that the money off Smith and buy the bolts, which is what they did. They started doing it on a weekly replacement basis, and there were no derailments.

You can't have a steam train going up a hill pulling a blackwood carriage, to then fall back down the hill. I only had one rack - I know I am getting away from this, but this is what bothers

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

me with all this. There was only one rack on that line and you have to have two. The man who was doing it said, 'I'm only carting people not freight so it won't matter'. But when the bolts are the wrong bolts - bought from a Zeehan hardware shop - they can slip off sideways against the rack and go straight down the hill and they're all dead with a steam engine on top of them.

I had myself in a lot of trouble over that, but I was right and proven right and suggest I saved quite a few lives. Some of these people that talk about this do not know anything about it.

Anyhow back to your story on the bridge. That guy was quoting \$3 million to put a deck on the bridge at Karoola. So I said to Peter Gutwein that I will pay for the bridge deck myself, no cost. This is a week, a fortnight, before the election. His words were, 'Alright, I will make the decision about it a week after the election, but not before. But can you nobble Wendy McLennan until the election is over'. I said, 'I could probably do that', and he said, 'Well if you do and quieten her down a bit we will do it'.

I have to tell you this because a week went by and there was nothing about the rail line and it went on. Six weeks later, he still had not done anything about it, so, I sent him a letter and said seeing as you do not a copy, because I purposely did not give it to you. I said, you did not stick to your word and therefore, I withdraw my offer to do the bridge and still did not get a response from that to this day.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is why we have had not had a response to your request to pay for the bridge.

**Mr CABALZAR** - There is that many ducks and drakes in this. That many people and Hidding was one of the main problems. Now he has gone it will help dramatically, the way it was pushed.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Paul, do you mind if I organise a meeting with the Treasurer and yourself and me?

**Mr CABALZAR** - The Treasurer? Yeah, right, that is okay. I would love it, yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We might be able to sort out some of those issues in a more private forum.

**Mr CABALZAR** - I want to do the bridge, not in timber but concrete. I will do it at my own expense, as in the original letter. I will pay for the whole bridge, 90 metres, finished, done. This business it costs \$3 million, it will cost nothing.

**Ms HOWLETT** - I will organise a meeting and we can sit down with the Treasurer and work that out.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you Paul for sharing those.

**Mr DEAN** - I wanted Paul to follow up a little bit on what Tania was talking about. Evidence given today and at other times was that one will not exist really without the other. It has to be heritage rail and also a rail trail, both. Not alongside one another, but a part rail trail and a part train.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

Would it work if you had the rail trail from Turners Marsh through to Lilydale, then jump on the train at Lilydale. You would have people going into Lilydale, a focal point here to purchase and do whatever they want, jumping on the train to Wyena, if that is the termination point in the first instance. Then those who wanted could ride through to Scottsdale as they would have their bikes on the train, or who wanted to would come back on the train to Lilydale. This would make it a probably two or three-hour adventure and is what a lot of people want. They want a three to four-hour adventure. They do not want one that goes for eight hours or longer; they want a shorter type activity. Would you see that working?

**Mr CABALZAR** - No I cannot see it at all. For instance, at the bottom line on my boundary, there is a cutting put in there in the 1800s, just wide enough for the train to go through. Solid block twice as high as this room and you can see where they used all hand drills to blast it out of the road. The rocks are still there on the left over the bank and it drops off at least 80 feet straight down. That is one spot. A lot of that railway line is very steep and it is cut into banks. Where are you going to get the room to put a bike trail, et cetera? You can't insure a rail corridor with people on it. That is why it has always been, 'no people on the rail corridor'.

**CHAIR** - I don't think Ivan means next to each other, do you?

**Mr DEAN** - No, I don't mean next to one another.

**CHAIR** - I think you might need to clarify, Ivan.

**Mr DEAN** - The rail trail would be on the line. I am not suggesting we rip up the lines because you can put it over the top of rail. Rail should be left there. I suggested a rail trail along the rail corridor to Lilydale, rail trail on the line from Wyena through to Scottsdale and a train in the middle section. I am not saying alongside.

**CHAIR** - You start off with the bikes from Turners Marsh to Lilydale, at Lilydale you have a train, not bikes, and from Wyena to Scottsdale you are back on bikes again. It is the one track but it has bikes, trains, then bikes again but not together.

**Mr DEAN** - I am not advocating pulling up any lines in that concept.

**Mr CABALZAR** - You are going to drive to Lilydale in your car to get on the train to go that short distance. It would not be profitable to do that, and there is nowhere to put the turntable to turn the train round at Lilydale Falls. We would have enough trouble doing that at Wyena.

**Mr DEAN** - I thought that there was a double track to change over at Lilydale.

**Mr CABALZAR** - There is, back in the town, but not on the road.

**Mr DEAN** - Perhaps if it started in Lilydale, where that is.

**Mr CABALZAR** - It is not very far, is it? It has to be profitable.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr DEAN** - It picks up the more scenic areas. Lilydale is a scenic area. You have the tunnel and Denison Gorge, which complement Lilydale and the great place it is. It picks up all of those.

**Mr CABALZAR** - I draw your attention to the Karoola Bridge. That is where we have a train now, on the side of the track beside the bridge, and we are working on it. Down off that hill from the top of Turners Marsh, from that hill down and all through there, it is very windy down the centre there, it comes along the top of the bridge, down in through Karoola and then it winds its way back through -

**A member** - Up the back, through Lalla.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes. This time of the year you have all the different coloured trees, autumn trees as well as gum trees. It is really pretty.

**Mr DEAN** - It is a pretty area through there.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Then you have other bridges through there. They are not a problem to do, they are small bridges, but they will be done in steel. The other problem you have with this line, which the bike people don't address at any time in all this, is they are going to have to put handrails in. If you are going to have bikes and kids on the track along these gorges and cuttings, you are going to have to have handrails. The cost - \$1.4 million will be gone in handrails. It is massive. It is heavy country and they drop off -

**Mr DEAN** - That has not been raised before.

**Mr CABALZAR** - I will have to put one on the bridge when I put the concrete deck across. I will have uprights coming out of the concrete and a handrail on one side, if the train breaks down on the bridge it is a safety thing. People have to get out of the side doors of the train, hang on to the handrail and walk off the bridge. You can get out of the back doors but that is not ideal, either. I have incorporated that in the new bridge. It has been talked about between us but the bike people never mention it.

**Mr DEAN** - Paul, have you spoken to the Dorset Council? There were issues at this end, too, with the City of Launceston Council. They really didn't want to become involved but I'm not quite sure where they stand now.

**CHAIR** - Perhaps a watching brief.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. Paul, have you spoken with the two councils?

**Mr CABALZAR** - I talked to the mayor about it all a long time ago and he never came back to me about it.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that the mayor in Launceston?

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes. I went to him with 10 points and he didn't address any of those in 18 months. Another day, we went to Dorset Council - a few of us, the committee - and we weren't allowed to speak very much at all. Greg Howard ran the meeting and told us what we should be

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

listening to, said 'see you all later' and out the door we went. It has never been talked about, such as which is the better idea, should we have bikes or should we have trains? There has been none of that and that is the sad thing because we shouldn't be at loggerheads. This is an opportunity for the north-east, the people and tourism of Tasmania.

Joe Chromy is about to build the only five-star hotel in Launceston. There isn't a five-star hotel here. He is going to spend \$150 million and we need to keep people here overnight.

**Mr DEAN** - That is a good point you're making. The point has been made that there has not been that proper consultation between the two groups. We're going to have a difficult task, this committee. Do you believe, even now, if there could be a strong negotiator between the two groups - we don't like to see that anger and the divisiveness, that is just not acceptable - that you could come to a position?

**Mr CABALZAR** - Greg Howard won't discuss it. He won't have a bar of it. He just says, it's bikes and that's it. Well, it's not a good thing. It's terrible.

**Mr DEAN** - No, it's certainly not.

**Mr CABALZAR** - We should all be able to sit down and discuss things like this, the wheres and whyfores and all that. When they did the Scottsdale to Billycock thing, we took that railway line up, the line and sleepers, and sold it without permission, got the money to crush the stone and so on. It definitely isn't used. There was supposed to be a big day during the last long weekend, and there were supposed to be 300 to 400 people there. Is that right, 300 or 400?

**Interjection** - About 300 that they carted into the top of Billycock Hill.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Right. There were supposed to be 300 there for the weekend but 42 that rode the thing. The demand isn't there for that type of riding. Derby - here is me talking about bikes, but there isn't a demand for it and here we are trying to -

**Ms RATTRAY** - The Derby experience is completely different to a rail trail, that is mountain biking. They have some low impact trails now.

**Mr DEAN** - I don't think Paul was saying that's not used. You're not talking about Derby.

**Mr CABALZAR** - No. It is a fantastic thing, really good.

**Mr DEAN** - It's the Tonganah and Billycock ride we are talking about, or Scottsdale.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes, I drove it in my car for 14 kilometres and turned around, because it was the only spot I could find to turn the car around. I took heaps of photos in the wetter months so I could see marks on the track and there were no pushbike tyres on it at all. Four-wheel drives and motorbikes had been down it but there were pushbike tracks. People aren't riding it. We did have a counter on it that long weekend. The only people who use it, they tell me up there, are the kids who ride it from the centre of town where it starts, then they go out to somewhere where they live, down Tonganah way. They ride it in that short distance around the town. They hoot down there.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -  
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 17/4/2019 LAUNCESTON  
(CABALZAR)**

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Paul, we heard today and in other hearings that the short heritage trails are more sustainable than longer ones, anything from 1 kilometre to 4 kilometres.

It might have been the rail regulator saying they are more sustainable and that they are the best way to go.

**Mr CABALZAR** - You can Google all that information on Puffing Billy. Thousands of people a year get on that. They pay \$79 per trip and it is for 25 kilometres and they are going past people's backyards and houses.

Imagine what they would like to do when they can get on one for 60 kilometres through magnificent country to Scottsdale and back, have a lovely day, sit back, the back car can have a wine thing in it like the Abt Railway has. People talk to me all the time saying, 'When are you going to get that train on the thing?' We all want to go on it.

It is a business. You are selling something. You can't clean the train 10 times a day from kids going on it, with sticky windows and all that. It needs to be a longer thing. I don't know what they are talking about. I can't imagine trying to keep a train clean all day and doing 3 kilometres.

We are offering a different thing altogether. It's a scenic trip. Also don't forget our lavender farm man. He has had the same problem as us getting past the council at Dorset. He has had that application in -

**Ms RATTRAY** - The application for accommodation was approved on Monday night.

**Mr CABALZAR** - It took him over two years, it's a \$10 million project and Greg Howard has held it up the whole time. There is too much of no negotiations -

**Mr DEAN** - Brick walls.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for that and appreciate your coming back. You are most welcome to stay and listen. We have Mandy Millar next.

**Mr CABALZAR** - Errol Stewart has been that flat out he still hasn't done his thing but it's coming and I'll give it to you when I get it.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## **PUBLIC**

### **Ms MANDY MILLAR WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** - You were here earlier when we mentioned that any evidence you give is protected by parliamentary privilege within this hearing but should you go outside and say the same, it may not be afforded such privilege. The evidence you present is being recorded and will be available on the committee website when it becomes available.

You know everyone here. If you would like to give a short introduction and members can then ask you some questions.

**Ms MILLAR** - Mine is not a technical submission. Mine is from the point of view of a bike rider who has toured a fair bit and spoken to a lot of bike riders. I wasn't a bike rider at all until my later life and I have since done a couple of bike riding tours in Europe and New Zealand. That is the full extent of my experience. I also am a Warmshowers host. I don't know if any of you have heard of that.

**Mr DEAN** - What is that, sorry?

**Ms MILLAR** - It is called Warmshowers. It is a worldwide organisation that started in 1993 in the US. It now has 85 000 participants on the website and it runs on goodwill. It is an organisation that provides for hosts and cyclists to be able to link up. The host provides, maybe, a warm shower, a bed or a spot to camp in a garden.

I have hosted, over the last few years, 40 or 50 cyclists. I have had people from all over the world - couples, single people and they are travelling around our state. They always ask about the rail trails: 'Where are there trails that we can get on?' Because of our local knowledge, we talk to them about the best way to go. Most of them, if they are starting in Launceston, go from Launceston down the east coast and around, so we have the choice of telling them they have the Lilydale Road or The Sideling to go on, and they make the choice which way to go.

I recently had a French couple who had used the rail trail from Billycock Hill down to Scottsdale. They absolutely loved it because you are not contending with cars all the time so it was beautiful. I have ridden that rail trail several times myself in the last couple of weeks and have seen other people on the rail trail.

We travelled in New Zealand. There are cycle paths everywhere. They don't have to be rail trails either, but there are cycle paths everywhere. We did the famous Otago one, which is their first one, I think. The organisation around that trail and the services offered on that trail were amazing. We were travelling in a campervan around the south island of New Zealand and we parked in the middle. There were several organisations we could choose from. They took us out to a place a day's ride away. In either direction we could ride back. It was really well organised. There were accommodation places all the way along that. These organisations would transfer your luggage from one accommodation place to the next. There was a lot of infrastructure around it. There are a few small towns on it and we went into those towns, had a beer, had a coffee and the pubs loved it.

That is all I can say, really. Probably this gentleman alluded to the fact that the Scottsdale to Billycock section is not used a lot, but I am sure it would be if there was more length to it. If



## **PUBLIC**

there was more purpose about going from Launceston to Billycock - if it went from Launceston right down the east coast it would be amazing. I have had people from Korea who have travelled in Tasmania; this gentleman rode from Hobart to Launceston and then he rode out to Eddystone Point - sorry, I can't remember the proper name - just to experience the stars. I know this sounds airy-fairy after all the technical stuff, but -

**CHAIR** - It's just as important.

**Ms MILLAR** - He did it just to see the stars, et cetera. He was from Seoul. He had an app on his phone that measured the particulates in the air and he couldn't believe our readings. That is the other side. People come here just for the beauty, which this gentleman is professing too, but they could co-exist, surely. That's really all I have to say.

I would like to say, in Europe we travelled for three weeks on bikes and we probably did about 1800 kilometres. Ninety-five per cent of that was on bike trails and there were people everywhere doing it.

**Mr FARRELL** - Were they bike trails specially built as bike trails or former railway corridors?

**Ms MILLAR** - No, they were both. We went on one rail trail that went for 90 kilometres, but a lot of them were just a bitumen path across a paddock - amazing. You would be riding along and there would be a farmhouse with a sign out saying 'coffee and cake' - all those little things in the garden, on a different level. It's so easy without wondering if you are going to get run over.

**CHAIR** - I have read your submission; it was good.

**Ms MILLAR** - Thank you.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Craig asked the question that I was interested in, was it predominantly unused rail or was it purpose-built trails? Given your knowledge, because you have ridden that way, can you see the opportunity for a bike trail?

**Ms MILLAR** - Absolutely.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Without taking up the rail corridor as well? Can you see there is an opportunity there or not?

**Ms MILLAR** - I think there is opportunity for bike trails anywhere. You have only got to look around at the number of cyclists that you see around the place. Why are we not building bike trails beside our new highways, that sort of thing? It would be really cost-effective and easy to do it at that time, I would have thought but I do not know. I am just talking.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Tasmanians do not even use public transport very well, let alone bikes. That is one of the issues that we have with Hobart.

**Ms MILLAR** - I think if it was there it would happen. I use the trails in Launceston a lot. I used to ride my bike to work at Kings Meadows from the middle of town. That was fine. I use

## **PUBLIC**

the trails going out towards Grammar a lot and I can ride for 30 or 35 kilometres at a time on the trails around Launceston and they are good. You look at the number of people and families who ride their bikes down at Seaport because they can. There are all those trails that go out along the river, it is just beautiful. I think if we had them they would be used.

**Mr DEAN** - I support the fact that we need to cater for bike riders. I am a bike rider and I bike ride around the world as well, in other countries.

**Ms MILLAR** - You know what I am talking about, don't you?

**Mr DEAN** - But not all people can ride bikes. In fact, bike usage in this country, while the bike sales are outgrowing car sales, we still do not have a high percentage of bike riders.

From your submission, and it comes from this point I am making, where you say, 'Tasmania has a chance to reap benefits in proportion to these', and you are talking about Europe where everybody, well not everybody but 90 per cent of people have a bike, and they bike ride. We do not have that here so I do not think that we can mirror that. While we have got to cater for them we have got to do it sensibly.

**Ms MILLAR** - Absolutely, but don't you think that is an attitudinal change? If bike riding was safer here maybe there would be more.

**Mr DEAN** - But do you not think we also have to cater for those who like the heritage train experience, the train experience which caters for the elderly?

**Ms MILLAR** - I am not saying not to.

**Mr DEAN** - My other question comes from the fact that you would not have been here when the other evidence was taken, about the fact that the two need to go together. We need heritage on this north-east trail, we need heritage train and we need rail trail, both. Not alongside one another but in different sections. Maybe the train in the first section and then the rail trail at the other end or split. This is coming to the question. My question is, do you believe that that is the way to go? What is the best option you see for the north east trail?

**Ms MILLAR** - The best option I see is to have a bike path all the way through to Derby, down the east coast, which is ambitious, but why not? If we have to compromise, well we have to compromise.

**Mr DEAN** - Should we compromise?

**Ms MILLAR** - That is not up to me. That is up to you guys with all the information. I would like to see it go all the way, sure, of course I would. I would like to see a bike path all the way, absolutely. It does not have to be on the rail. I do not care where it is as long as we can ride it. I am not saying, do not do anything, that is not up to me. I do not have the technical knowledge. I am just giving my little bit.

**Mr DEAN** - We have lots of other bike trails being considered at the present time. George Town is considering one. Will there be a saturation point do you think that we need?

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms MILLAR** - Not at all.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Mandy, you said you rode in Europe on both rail trails and the other trails. Can you tell me how they differ? The rail trail would be more level, I would imagine.

**Ms MILLAR** - It was pretty flat where we were. We rode up the Rhine and that was all bitumen. That was a designated cycle path. There was the river, the bike path, the rail and the roads. The French people I had said, 'Oh the 'ills in Tasmania, the 'ills'.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - In your opinion, the trail, if it went from Lilydale to Scottsdale and up the Billycock so to speak, it wouldn't be too long? It would complement the other rail track.

**Ms MILLAR** - Yes, absolutely, and on into Derby. It would really complement it.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - It is a different ride to the Derby one, isn't it?

**Ms MILLAR** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr DEAN** - It is absolutely great that you are riding a bike, absolutely wonderful.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. I appreciate you putting your submission in and coming along and speaking to us.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is good to have all variances and not all technical ones, so thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**