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**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSIONAL COMMITTEE GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION 'B' MET IN THE MECHANICS HALL, 11 KING STREET,
SCOTTSDALE ON WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019**

NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY

Mr STUART ALEXANDER BRYCE, CHAIR, **Ms EDWINA POWELL**, **Mr KENT RATTRAY** AND **Ms WENDY McLENNAN**, NORTH EAST RESIDENTS AND FARMERS, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Ms Armitage) - Thank you very much for coming along, and welcome to our public hearings.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege but I need to remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available on the table if you have not read it and if you are not familiar with the process. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available.

By way of introduction, we will ask you to make some short comments to your submission and then questions will be asked. We ask you please speak specifically to the terms of reference.

Stuart, would you like to start off, and members can then ask questions.

Mr BRYCE - Thank you. I have some details of what I am about to say and would like to table that document.

CHAIR - Thank you, we will table that.

Mr BRYCE - I will start at the very beginning, where the report commissioned by Tourism Northern Tasmania rejected a number of cyclists would ride the trail, as something like 23 600. I would like to put that term in weekly numbers, which would be 455 cyclists a week riding the trail.

Mr DEAN - So there are 23 600 annually - how many weekly?

Mr BRYCE - It would be 455 every week. Those figures were then put in the submission by Dorset Council to the National Stronger Regions Fund on 28 November. Questioning the numbers and addressing the mayor of Dorset's comments last year on ABC Radio, refuting 455 cyclists per week, I put it that the proposal sent to the National Stronger Region Fund was fraudulent in numbers, in financial benefit and alleged community support.

Post the release of the \$1.47 million funding and found in Dorset's November 2014 submission was the statement that a community engagement strategy would be conducted. That was never done on any scale recognised by the membership.

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Dorset Council claimed initially 130 letters had been written to people living along the line. The mayor, Mr Howard, later added it was 199 letters, but I know that an awful lot of people, including me, never received a letter. The letter was signed by Susie Bower and dated 14 October 2014. It was released on Dorset Council envelopes, which I suspect strongly were probably not opened by two-thirds of the people who lived in Launceston. They would not want to know why they got a letter from Dorset. One of our members in Launceston responded. He rejected the proposal outright; he was never contacted again. This was Michael Dale.

I would like to refer to the bike riding survey conducted by the Australian Bicycle Council and Austroads, showing marked reduction in cycling use between 2011 and 2017. The quote follows -

The 2017 National Cycling Participation Survey results published by Austroads and the Australian Bicycle Council suggests that Australian cycling is in freefall and has been since 2011 when the National Cycling Participation Survey was launched with the aim of doubling Australian participation by 2016.

From 2011 to 2017, the data showed almost 640 000 fewer Australians aged 2+ riding a bike at least per week and about 1.4 million fewer having cycled in the year prior to the survey.

As noted by the Australian bicycle network, the latest results from cycling participation survey are shattering. While bike riding across the world grows, Australia's participation languishes and falls away. [TBC]

The main interest for Tasmania, the push in cycling, has been mountain bike riding. There is no question about that. There are mountain bike tracks appearing everywhere. We are attracting a lot of people from the mainland who use mountain bikes. The mountain bike riders do not ride trails. A 2 per cent gradient and 81 metres minimum radius of turf is hardly the sort of trail a mountain bike rider would even be slightly interested in. Road bike riders, while the trail is unsealed, would still be riding on roads because their cycles are not suitable for riding trails.

So, who is going to ride the trail? We heard yesterday from Wendy McLennan that the Billycock trail is virtually devoid of riders. So where is the interest? We have a reduction in cycling and we have a big increase in mountain bike riding - what's happening?

We are like the Victorian potato blight. You might remember many years ago farmers in Tasmania, who were the last on the line to start planting spuds because the Victorian potato industry had died, died too because already there were plenty of spuds. How many spuds are there in cycling in Tasmania now?

In 2015, fourth generation resident Peter Arnold surveyed the residents along the north-east line, accruing a total of 225 residents strongly opposing a cycle path to replace the railway. A more recent survey found eight residents who support the cycle trail, five of them living at Lalla, which has already been conceded.

The main concerns of residents are around safety, privacy, biosecurity and security. These are valid concerns. There are many people along that railway line who are fourth generation plus, whose ancestors built the railway line or worked the railway line. Also, there are a lot of war

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veterans along the line who want the peace and quiet. We don't get peace and quiet from bicycles. Anybody who has lived on Beach Road in Beaumaris, and I've spent a bit of time there, would know they are the noisiest bunch you could possibly get going past.

There has been talk about putting up fences to stop the vision. That is fine, you can go out in your backyard in your undies, but we'll still hear them and that is one of the main concerns.

One resident, Kent Rattray, will speak later.

Are these people going to be ignored for the recreation of a few? That is a good rhetorical question.

Considering the planned track - these are some figures - is about 2 metres wide, according to the general manager of Dorset, Tim Watson, and that is from a phone call directly to me, this does not comply with the standards laid down by Austroads. Mayor Howard doesn't agree that these standards should apply. That includes fencing and batter either side of the cycle trail, which should normally be a minimum width of 2.4 metres, and that is obviously not going to happen. It is pretty hard to get 2.4 metres on a railway cutting. The train is 2.4 metres wide, which is eight feet, if you like, but some of that train is actually over the edge of the cutting. Some of the drops are 40 to 80 metres down. There is no evidence that the fencing that would be required to be safe is actually being done.

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

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

Biosecurity issues - where are the bicycles coming from? Have they been through the King Valley? Have they been anywhere near those *Phylloxera*-infested areas because we have vineyards? No, we don't know that. Are there bike-washing facilities before the start of the trail? Not that I know of. Of course, other pests and diseases that might cause us problems have not been taken into account.

Security - I've been talking to the police's northern commander and he says, 'Yes, we can get quadbikes on there, we can get motorcycles on there', and I said, 'Yes, but you can't get motorcycles after a certain hour', and by the time we call them, it is going to be too late. This is the problem with use of the track by miscreants. We're already experiencing that somewhere

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around the area where Kent lives and also in the area of Robert Dickinson. People are using that trail for purposes other than what it was designed for. Also, because it is still a railway line they are breaking the law so prosecutions should be dealt with.

Some of these costs are not being shown. One is that if the cycle trail is to be sealed, and I believe this has been brought up: who is paying? There is no commitment by any government to pay for the sealing. Can I give you a quote? It is about \$6 million to seal that 62 kilometres. Most of those costs are going to go towards the difficulty of getting into the terrain with the vehicles to seal the track in place.

The other thing is that we understand the police and SES have already spent some \$750 000 conducting rescues of cyclists injured on cycle trails, which I would assume would include predominantly mountain bikes. We have no issue with mountain bike trails, none whatsoever.

It would appear that the only proposal with the intent to open the iconic Denison Gorge is the joint North East Residents and Farmers (NERAF)-LNER proposal. In addition, the northern group of the Australian Plant Society has committed to assist in the revegetation of the gorge in conjunction with our activities. No countersuggestion has appeared from the cycling lobby, and it is unlikely they would have the assets or the capital.

We are hearing some disturbing rumours, and I will bring this up now, coming from the General Manager, Tim Watson, who has suggested that all the sleepers have been removed from the corners. We have people in this room who have walked that track from one end to the other and who can talk about it - Ross Broomhall, and I can also talk about Bruce Bresnehan - and it is intact. These are being used to convince people and they are outright lies, Chair.

Finally, naturally, NERAF supports the rail among the joint membership of over 1000. The rail came along at about the second or third meeting that we had, and we have meetings every month except December and they are minuted meetings. All those records are available if you ever want to see them. That is when the trains came in. It was a young fellow by the name of Clifton Brown who was vice-chair of the Launceston and North-East Railway, who said we could use it.

Comments by one of your next speakers, Michael Scott, who attended one of our meetings: when I asked him outright, 'Why bicycles?', he said, 'There was nothing else on the table'. Well, nobody looked for anything else on the table, and it is a railway line. I think it is fair to state, too, that almost every bike trail in Australia and in New Zealand was built on empty beds. The rails have already gone. So the cost of re-establishing a railway would be out of the question. We understand that and take that as the force modifier for what we are trying to achieve.

Among the joint membership of over 1000, we have the skills that would assist in the maintenance of the railway itself or trains and in marketing, promotion and staffing. Thank you.

Mr RATTRAY - Today I intend to just to give an outline of my story, not so much the story that we have just heard.

I own a 130-acre farm just out of Scottsdale, Lietinna. My wife and I run a training facility where we train eight to 10 racehorses. We have been reasonably successful over the last 15 to 20

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years. I have produced four Group Three winners from that track. My father who trained with me for a while had Three Group three winners, so we run a reasonably solid operation.

That track was put in early 2000. It was about when the trains stopped running but we did not put it in because the train was still in operation or because there was a chance of it still running at that time. It didn't worry me because I knew when the train was going through and it did not affect me. The track was built within 10 to 15 metres of where the train runs past and I had never had any problems working with horses there.

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

When I am working the right way on my track, I can come at a solid 40 kilometre [per hour?] clip down off the hill around a blind corner looking onto the railway line. I have never had any problem with this so far. Our concern, and I have spoken with my stewards, is that if random bikes and tourists are using the area, it will become an OH&S problem. That is basically where our beef comes from.

Back-tracking a little bit to when I first heard the bike track was going to happen: it was early February or May. The grant was in May 2015. I heard on ABC Radio that they were talking about pulling the tracks up and putting bike track in. I had previously never received any correspondence.

I knew there was talk of them continuing it, but it was only ever talk. When I heard it on the ABC, they had received a grant and the lady from Lilydale on the bike crew said they had consulted with all the landowners and neighbours and there were only seven complaints and they had dealt with them and were going on.

At that stage, I promptly went to the Dorset Council and asked to speak with whomever I was meant to consult with. I said I was a neighbour of the railway line; they said they did not know of me but would ring Tim Watson and see what the story was.

On that Friday, Tim Watson was opening the Derby bike track or doing something at the bike track, because he was not available.

The following week I spoke with Suzie Bower and she was arranging for them to meet with me. There were three rescheduled meetings, but within a six-week period I had a visit from Suzie and Tim Watson, who came to my property.

We drove my track. I explained my concerns. They came up with some half-ideas they thought might be able to fix it. One of them was they were going to put a silhouette of a bicycle with a person sitting on it at the edge of the track so the horses would get used to it. I said I did not think that was an answer. Then they wanted to grow a hedge. I said unless you can get it at least 10 or 15 metres high, it was not going to work.

After about an hour-and-a-half of going around, Mr Watson said he would go away and obtain some answers to solve my problem. They both agreed I had a problem. That was May 2015. Since then, I have never had any contact with the Dorset Council, apart from a question to

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Greg Howard in the street one day. I said, 'They have never been back in touch with me', and he said, 'You are getting a shade-cloth fence.' I said, 'I am what?' He said, 'It is in the submission, you are getting a shade-cloth fence.' I said, 'Nobody has ever said anything or told me that or explained how it is going to solve my problem.'

That is where I sit with my business. If the bike track goes ahead, there is the randomness of somebody being there with me not knowing they are there - coming around the corner when I am hobbling at speed with a horse in the cart. I run a little bit the same problem as the rail trail does. I have steeper edges - if my horse shies and I go over the edge, one of us is going to come to grief, maybe both of us. It will be a real OH&S issue when running my business. I have contemplated selling up and moving on if they go ahead. It is something we will have to talk about.

With that in mind, I went to the initial meeting with North East Residents and Farmers Association. We met at Lilydale a few times. I have been to probably 85 per cent of those meetings. I was involved with doing a petition, which I chased up, and I believe I did the right thing. I had close to 900 petitioners and submitted it only to be told without 1000 names, they did not have to look at it. If I had been told it was 1000, I could have got 1000. I spent a month chasing those up with a few other people. It was not hard to obtain signatures on a petition. They did look at it, they did give me answers, but the mayor could not answer. Tim Watson came back with an answer that was not adequate - it was that they would deal with it at the time.

I have been at the property now for 22 years. I occasionally see a couple of motorcyclists attempt to run up the railway line, but they never come back. They might go that way, but they do not come back because it is too rough and hard on their tyres. The railway line itself is an impediment to any foreign traffic going up and down. It has a double impact for me. I am happy to see a train go past any time. I can usually hear them coming and be out of their way and they usually run on a schedule, which I can work around, but bicycles are silent. You do not know they are there until you come on them.

Likewise, if the rail line is lifted, it will open it up to motorcycles and all other things which come at speed and would be a real problem to my business.

That is basically my story. I realise I am one of many, but everyone has a different story. If those rail lines are pulled up, it would seriously impact my business.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms POWELL - I have to say at the outset as a Dorset councillor I fully respect the Dorset Council's decision to support Peter Gutwein's proposal on 19 November, which basically the Dorset Council unconditionally adopts the approach outlined by Peter Gutwein MP, Treasurer, Minister for State Growth, in his recent letter received by council proposing a compromise solution for the future use of the North East Railway. That letter to Dorset Council also proposed preliminary proceedings necessary for the handover of the management of the rail corridor.

Yesterday I received a reminder from Tim Watson, Dorset Council Manager, in relation to the code of conduct section 5 -

A Councillor's personal views must not be expressed in such a way as to undermine the decision of the Council. [TBC]

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The relevance of this clause is the motion put forward by Councillor Jessup, where council moved to support the compromise position of the dual use of the rail corridor. The code of conduct changes to the legislation was discussed yesterday at the council meeting and in that context, I was distinctly discouraged from giving evidence today. I had a sleepless night. I did not know whether parliamentary privilege protects me, and since I have been warned of the possible offence, sought to speak in camera. I have come in here reassured parliamentary privilege does protect me, but I was very determined not to have my clearly personal views misconstrued as undermining the position of council, through a very narrow interpretation of that clause. I felt genuinely intimidated, so I will proceed in the open if that is okay.

CHAIR - That is fine.

Ms POWELL - My view is that the Legislative Council quite rightly must explore this important problem of the responsibility of state infrastructure in the matter of corridors. This is a state question, not a local one. It is a broader question than Dorset.

My evidence is essentially an addendum to what I submitted to the inquiry in early November, so I won't go back over that.

I do not hold the view that my evidence would undermine the decision of council as I see these as very separate matters. I don't see them as being in direct conflict. I need to state clearly that I am here in my capacity as a private citizen who believes that the state infrastructure belongs to the state and that a corridor should remain in the hands of the government.

The line was built in 1899. It was world-breaking at the time. It was built just 19 years after the first trans-US railway was built. That is significant. In fact, it was that surveyed railway line that determined the location of Scottsdale, not the other way around as I am told. This is our heritage and our history, which should not be forgotten in the rush to pull up tracks. Those few residents who I have met along the track mourn for their railway as many of their fathers and grandfathers built and maintained that line. It is not merely a nostalgia for the past; it is a living, breathing continuity of the story of Tasmania. Its rich oral history is yet to be tapped. Obviously, this little-known history can be enhanced and developed through the physical presence of a train.

I have a very personal view of the role of social capital in our society. It is not just dollars and cents and economics. Certainly, there are the practicalities one has to work through. I have a personal view of the role of social capital and the slowing down of time in a busy world. Whatever is decided, we need to envisage the community's needs, not just over the next 10 years time; we really have to plan for the next 20 years and the next 50 years. I will be dead then, but we really need to think about that. What will Tasmania look like? What will the north-east look like? What are our needs?

I will just reflect, if I can -

CHAIR - Just bear in mind that we have limited time and to allow time for people to ask questions.

Ms POWELL - I began as a candidate for the Dorset Council in September 2018 and I was continually asked where I stood on the train versus the bike question. My view at the time was

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that everybody needed to step back and review the situation. As far back as 2015 I was aware of the bid for the rail trail and was interested in the fact that the farmers on that line had raised objections. I cannot recall any mechanism for community consultation. The whole question of this line and corridor goes beyond who is on the railway line; it goes across the whole of the north-east. No-one was talked to about what they wanted.

I have been told that a not inconsiderable number of residents living next to the line have ownership of the line, worked on the line, were porters, manned the stations, and they all had very strong views and they should be considered.

It wasn't until the state election that I really began to understand there was a very real and deep division in the community over this question. It ranged across the region, not just the areas of the train line. While campaigning I was always asked whether I was for the bikes or for the trains, which I thought was extraordinary. I knew that I had to consider more carefully what all this meant for Dorset. I was surprised that at that first council meeting the motion was put to firm up the decision to support the compromise proposal, where I had sincerely hoped the council would fully explore all of the options.

CHAIR - Thank you. Wendy, you have spoken, but do you have anything to add?

Ms McLENNAN - The only thing I need to add from yesterday was the total lack of consultation. When the decision came to the Dorset Council at that meeting, which was the very first meeting with Edwina and me, and it was put to that meeting by the deputy mayor, we spoke against the motion. I spoke against the motion because they were saying we had to support this motion because it was the best outcome. One of the things the Dorset Council did was write to the Launceston City Council saying it hadn't been provided with the right information to be able to decide to extend the rail part of the corridor to the Wyena border, which was its border. It came back and said that the Launceston council needed to reconsider the decisions it had made. That is all I would like to add.

Mr DEAN - On that point of the public consultation, I understood from briefings we had three years ago that there had been a number of public meetings. Were there not a number of public meetings held in relation to this matter?

Ms McLENNAN - No.

Mr BRYCE - Only by us. There were two. One was convened by Peter Gutwein. He did not attend; he sent Tony Benneworth to do it and the mood at that meeting was clearly rail. There was no argument about it whatsoever. Following that meeting I was appointed by the community to lead this. The other meeting is one I recall with the Lilydale District Progress Association, which had endorsed it; Sarah Hirst spoke at that meeting and said they had endorsed it. What happened was that there was a mass enrolment at the Lilydale District Progress Association, the committee was rolled and that decision was removed. They are the only two public meetings that I remember other than the ones we have actually run ourselves.

Mr DEAN - Okay. I probably have that wrong, but I thought there were and there was some disruption at one of the meetings or something.

Mr BRYCE - That was a council meeting on 20 August.

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Mr DEAN - Right, so it was in a council meeting that the disruption occurred.

Mr BRYCE - The mayor lost control of the meeting.

Mr DEAN - The question I asked yesterday was: I understand that the farmers in this instance have considered other actions that they might take in the event that it would proceed as currently the Government wants it to proceed, or their proposal that is half-and-half. Can you let us know the farmers' position?

Mr BRYCE - There have already been a couple of demonstrations, one held at Lilydale and one in the Brickfields Park in Launceston, supportive of the railway. At the one in Lilydale we had six policemen coming out to sort us out, but with the assistance of a 27-tonne excavator we managed to hold the day.

I have 66 submissions that would be put to the planning appeals authority in the event the legislation was passed. Once it becomes a planning issue, we would then be very active in that regard. Other than that I am not prepared to say anything more on what we might or might not do.

Mr DEAN - Sure. I appreciate that. Have you had any recent discussions with the council at all in relation to the Government proposal? Has the council come out and spoken to your organisation since that Government position was put forward?

Mr BRYCE - No, but the Launceston council has.

Mr DEAN - Yes, but I am talking about the Dorset Council.

Mr BRYCE - No, nothing. We haven't had a lot of luck with Dorset Council. Wendy, before she was a councillor, was coming to a meeting and they wouldn't allow her to speak. We could see quite clearly the mayor's mind was like a steel trap. Nothing was going to come out of it. We have done our best. We have made approaches to Tim Watson as well. We have made approaches to council, in council.

Mr DEAN - This is since the Government put its proposal forward, is it?

Mr BRYCE - Yes.

Mr DEAN - This is since the Government put its proposal forward and got its position of the train to Turners Marsh to the Lilydale -

Mr BRYCE - We've never had a single movement our way in the Dorset Council whatsoever.

Mr DEAN - There has been a shut-off of information coming from the council to groups that support heritage rail?

Mr BRYCE - We have constantly been referred to as delusional and dreaming. The council is strongly in support of the report by Ray Bartlett, Raylink, which was done on a commercial

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basis, but also suggests that every set of fishplates on the railway line had to be replaced because they were frozen. What he didn't understand is that other than on the straights, the fishplates are frozen because we don't have the rates of expansion that you do on the mainland. There are 30 000 sets of fishplates that will have to be replaced. In other words, every rail will have to be disconnected between Launceston or between Coldwater Creek and Scottsdale, which is rubbish.

Mr DEAN - Being fair to council, I should ask this question. Has the North East Residents and Farmers Inc. sought a meeting with the Dorset Council from in relation to the proposal?

Mr BRYCE - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Recently I'm talking about - since the Government's position was put forward?

Mr BRYCE - All our meetings are open meetings and the council is more than welcome to attend. We've only ever had Mayor Howard attend one meeting and she tells me his life was threatened. I don't believe that for a moment, because there was nobody else who heard it.

Mr FARRELL - Stuart, you mentioned Sarah Hirst. When we were looking at the original strategic infrastructure corridor bill, which has led to this inquiry, she was, I believe, a business person from Lilydale who was the main proponent for the bicycle track, and has taken up that mantle? Is Ms Hirst is still involved in that? Am I correct in assuming that?

Mr BRYCE - I understand the mantle has been taken over by Mr Harry Rigby who lives in north Lilydale and is a very strong opponent of the rail and very strong for bicycles, but he doesn't have a lot of support from Lilydale. He certainly doesn't have it from the traders of Lilydale.

Mr FARRELL - The mood around Lilydale - I'm intrigued to know why a push from Lilydale, outside the Dorset municipality, has been so strong. I don't know if you can put any light onto that. Is it just through effective lobbying?

Mr BRYCE - Other than followers of Sarah Hirst, I think - and I wouldn't be speaking out of turn to suggest this - if you like to count up the number of businesses she has started and hasn't finished, that's one of them.

Mr FARRELL - Earlier it was mentioned that this is very much a state responsibility; from what you have followed through with the strategic infrastructure corridor bill, do you feel that weakens the state's control over what is a state asset?

Mr BRYCE - Absolutely. The rail infrastructure - the interesting thing is if you look up the infrastructure act, as far as Tasmania is concerned, it only has roads there. It doesn't even mention rail. Probably at the time it was written, rail might have been in the hands of the Commonwealth, which it was, but quite clearly that is defence infrastructure as well as essential infrastructure in the state and it should not ever go from state hands.

Ms McLENNAN - Can I address that, please? I don't think the farmers and residents along the line have any idea of the implications of the strategic infrastructure corridor bill and the onus it's putting onto them. They have to give up their properties and also maintain fencing along the line to prevent any stray people coming in. I don't believe that bill had proper consideration when it was prepared.

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Mr ARMSTRONG - I read that in 2015-17 you became incorporated and you had over 360 members and now you're up to over 400 - is that still the figure?

Mr BRYCE - Yes, just over 400.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What does membership cost?

Mr BRYCE - Twenty dollars.

Mr ARMSTRONG - A year? Per year, so you have continued to grow your membership over that time?

Mr BRYCE - We have, but we also have a lot of donations. As I said, we also have a fighting fund, which will help us out if all else fails.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Over the time this has been on our books, we have heard people suggest that cycle tracks should be alongside the rail track. What are your comments about that?

Mr BRYCE - It is not hard to answer. To start with a rail corridor is centred 10 metres either way from the centre of the track. I mentioned earlier about how this railway line is run into cuttings. What I mean by a cutting is a cutting taken out of mountain like that.

Mr ARMSTRONG - We have seen some today.

Mr BRYCE - The mayor of Dorset believes that is a culvert. He cannot understand why bicycles could fall upwards but a cutting is actually that. In today's parlance a cutting is that. It was a culvert in 1899 so you have to get the parlance right to know what we are going on about. You have a railway track that cuts maybe not even eight feet into the hill for the train. How are we going to run a bicycle trail alongside it, notwithstanding our position is no bikes, but how are you going to run a bicycle trail?

Mr ARMSTRONG - You were saying you do not want any bikes.

Mr BRYCE - No, that is the position of my membership.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I cannot see it anywhere, but has your group done any business plans?

Mr BRYCE - Yes, we have and they have been circulated to you and to the membership of the council.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Because we have seen others like the Abt Railway and Puffing Billy because they are really struggling to make a go of it. I was wondering when we might be going to look at Puffing Billy?

Mr BRYCE - The Abt Railway, of course, because of its remoteness has difficulty in being fed with people. We are talking about a railway line within half an hour of an airport. It is a different thing entirely. I would also like to mention - and I hope you do this is - go to Victoria and have a look at the Yarra Valley Railway which was built from nothing. The success of the

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Yarra Valley Railway has not depleted the success of the other 19 or 20 tourist and heritage experiences in Victoria. Puffing Billy is not struggling to make money. They are doing just fine. If you go there and check them out, you will find out that that is perfectly true.

Mr ARMSTRONG - We were told yesterday that they were only just holding their own.

Mr BRYCE - Oh, really? I would refute that.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I am going on what we were told.

Mr BRYCE - That is fine.

Mr ARMSTRONG - You can refute it if you like, but I am just going on what we were told yesterday.

Mr BRYCE - Puffing Billy, probably of all the tourist and heritage railways in Victoria, is the most successful.

Mr RATTRAY - When we had our first meeting, we had a room full of people who were naysayers. We do not want bikes. That was the whole room. I remember standing up that day and telling those people that if our only plan of attack is that we do not want them, we had already lost and we must go out and must seek alternatives. Over time we married up with the heritage rail boys - we embraced it. We have gone with it. We have put together a plan that is an alternative to having those bikes and pulling up an asset the state owns.

My vision from all of that is that one day a light rail train will from Inveresk, where we talk of having a college with 10 000 students, a lot of them not Australian - perhaps Asian or whatever - who will be looking for things to do on a weekend. If that train could be filled every weekend with students looking for a weekend out, the ride could go via the lavender farm and the wineries to Scottsdale. They could bring their bikes on the train. They could take the track to Derby. They could ride Derby. They could head to the golf course. It would open up the north-east for people who do not travel in cars, who are used to coming from a society where trains are their main form of transport, and it would open up the north-east and tourism to a different type of tourist.

We have been on a four-year trip. I have been to most of those meetings and I envisage that should we get to the stage where we deliver a rail carriage into Inveresk and weekend tourism and holiday tourism into the north-east, there is no end to where that could go. That is my vision for what we are doing.

Ms ARMITAGE - We were told yesterday by a couple of the members settled on your position now that they will work to bring the rail back to the full capacity so it could carry timber and whatever it may need to carry. Is that where you and your group stand?

Mr RATTRAY - I would have no problem if that occurred. I find it a little bit difficult at the moment to see this, but what we must do is to keep our eyes open. That is the corridor our forefathers opened this country up with and it is still probably the cheapest option to take product from the north-east. Trucks cost us money.

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Mr ARMSTRONG - A lot of pine plantations.

Mr RATTRAY - Absolutely.

Mr ARMSTRONG - One thing that did amaze me yesterday was the price they were quoting, \$100 per trip.

Ms RATTRAY - Stuart, in regard to the Coldwater Creek situation, which we touched on yesterday: I was at the meeting at Lilydale where one of the joint owners or adjoining landowners of Coldwater Creek indicated he did not know anything about using his land as an access point.

Has your group had any discussions with the adjoining landowner, Mr Archer? I am interested if you might share that with the committee.

Mr BRYCE - Gerald Archer and Paul Cabalzar are adjoining landowners on Coldwater Creek.

Ms RATTRAY - We heard from Mr Cabalzar yesterday.

Mr BRYCE - That is right. Neither of them wants any access to Coldwater Creek other than by train. It is purely a rail junction and the way it will remain.

If, for example, the bike thing was going to go from Coldwater Creek, the earliest place they could get on the line would be Turners Marsh.

Ms RATTRAY - There is effectively no access to Coldwater Creek, but actually where the North-East Rail trail is proposed to either start or finish, whichever end you get on.

Mr BRYCE - Yes. No access.

Ms RATTRAY - Whether you get on at the Billycock or where ever else, that was the end.

Mr BRYCE - No access. None at all.

Ms McLENNAN - There is not any access there; it is on private property.

Mr FARRELL - Recently with the compromise position Treasury presented, I was wondering whether any of your people had any input either through Treasury, tourism or infrastructure on this proposal.

Mr BRYCE - A lot of letters were written, and we are talking about residents along the line who oppose a cycle trail anywhere on the line.

Ms McLENNAN - I had input, being a representative of Launceston, the North-East Rail and North-East Residents and Farmers. The impression came through during our meeting with them that they were quite dismissive and already had a plan in place. They kept saying, 'You are going to go from Coldwater Creek to Lilydale', and we kept saying, 'No, our first proposal is to go from Lilydale through to Wyena'. They were not hearing us.

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I would like to go back to the grant application. It is only the grant of \$1.47 million given by the federal government and the matching funding by the Dorset Council that makes this rail trail anything of a reality. Without that grant, this rail trail would not take place.

In the grant application, they said the fears and concerns of the local community had been recognised and addressed. That was put into the actual original grant application and there has been absolutely little consultation with any property owners along line. When this was brought up with the mayor, his comment was that the letters had been sent out, but they must have been lost at the Lilydale Post Office. That was where this ended. They also said business owners, adjoining landowners, news groups and host communities had all been consulted with.

One of the things put to the Dorset Council was that if there had been a change by Treasury of reducing down the amount of rail trail there is going to be, does that mean the grant also is reduced, because the grant was to cover a 63-kilometre distance? The other thing put was, 'Why do not you extend the rail trail you have put in between Scottsdale and the Billycock Hill. You have pulled out all of the rest of the rail, so why not extend over the hill to Ledgewood or further on that way, which would give you the distance in the railway?' The reply was the landowners there did not want a rail trail on their property.

Mr FARRELL - Most of your dealing has been done through Treasury, not through Tourism or Infrastructure ministers?

Mr BRYCE - I have had dealings with both Chris Griffin, Luke Martin and Peter Gutwein, and of course, Mayor Howard. Most of the transmissions to Peter Gutwein were not answered and neither were the ones to Chris Griffin. Luke Martin did respond. We feel we have been stonewalled by the Administration. This is, as I said, a steel-trap deal and what they want and what they want to get. The supporting evidence is not there.

Mr FARRELL - Nothing from Tourism Tasmania?

Mr BRYCE - Who is Tourism Tasmania?

Ms McLENNAN - Luke Martin, Chris Griffin.

Mr FARRELL - No, Chris is part of a lobby group - Luke is not Tourism Tasmania.

Mr BRYCE - We have also had dealings with LGAT.

Mr DEAN - You mention about the sealing of the track. I think Stuart mentioned this. I was of the view, and obviously it might have changed, that it was intended simply to be only the crushed compacted gravel, so how has this changed?

Mr BRYCE - It was, but in the original submission it said the state Government would be approached to seal the trail. As far as I know, the state Government has not been approached to seal the trail. That would have been another \$6 million on top of the \$3 million, assuming that is the price. The other condition, too, is the fact they are still talking about selling the rails to make the money, whereas in fact the Government has already decided the rails will be banked. They belong to the Government, so why don't we leave them where they are.

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Mr DEAN - Have there been any surveys done by the people of Dorset in relation to this?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes, I can tell you one went in the actual grant. It said 34 per cent of the adult population living in Dorset is obese, while only 16.4 of the Dorset adults report their health is poor or fair, compared to 19 per cent for the state average. This is the reason why you need to put in a bicycle trail so these people can become un-obese - if that's the word - and they can start riding and get healthier. Because the rail trail was going to be at no cost to the user, it meant this would reverse the high-risk factors of diabetes and heart disease and provide significant cost benefits to the society and health system. The argument was that if we can get everybody on a bike, it is going to make us all healthier.

Mr BRYCE - In October 2017, we commissioned ReachTEL, a survey group in Brisbane, to actually survey the people of Dorset. They interviewed 693 people in Dorset and the result was that 70 per cent were in favour of the rail. Please note, the mayor did not use the rail trail in his approach at the last election. It was not even mentioned. Okay, he got 64 per cent of the vote, but he did not campaign on the rail trail.

Mr DEAN - I think I made that comment yesterday in a similar issue. You mentioned Tim Watson - I think you said he stated that all the sleepers were removed from corners. Whereabouts was that made and is there more detail around that? It is a pretty important matter.

Mr BRYCE - It was made here in Scottsdale.

Mr DEAN - It was made to another person. When was that made again?

Ms RATTRAY - It was 12 to 18 months ago, Madam Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

CHAIR - Do we have any other urgent questions? We have added on a little time for our delay. If not, thank you very much for coming in. We appreciate you coming and giving some advice to your submissions.

Messrs BRYCE, POWER, RATTRAY AND McLENNAN - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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MIKE SCOTT WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome to the Legislative Council public hearings on the North East Rail. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I need to remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available on the table if you have not read it or are not aware of the process. The evidence you give is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the Committee website when available.

We will ask you to give a short introduction and then members will ask questions. We ask that the information specifically relates to the terms of reference.

Mr SCOTT - Thank you for the opportunity of being able to address you. I will provide some information on my background and why I am so interested in this particular topic.

I am representing not only myself but also my wife and my family with three generations of the Scott family. We live on a property south of Lilydale. We are neighbours of the corridor for about 800 metres. I have a neighbour and a neighbour's neighbour. Collectively we have about 2 kilometres alongside the corridor and we are all very passionate supporters of the rec trail option.

I would like to explain briefly why I have that background. I would like to add a few other aspects of my background which are pertinent to this inquiry. First, my wife is a nurse; she cannot be here today, she is on night shift and did not think she would be particularly coherent at this time of day. Both of us have travelled extensively. We have visited and used rail trails all around the world, particularly here in Australia. We have also ridden tourist rail operations and our last count was five continents.

We have a pretty deep community perspective to bring as well to the committee. Both of us on and off have been members of the Lilydale District Progress Association for the last 14 years and I am a past president of that organisation.

Beyond that I am a professional chartered engineer. I have worked as a senior manager in one of Launceston's major manufacturing companies looking after the technical, quality and environmental processes within that business. Within that is the need for project management of major facilities within that company.

For that reason and with that experience, I have been invited by the University of Tasmania over the past 10 years to teach project management to the fourth-year engineering students. For the record for this committee, I am a current board member of the North East Recreation Trail Route.

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

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

I like the recreational trail option for that because I have seen and ridden other trails elsewhere and seen how professionally they are managed. On the document you have seen in our submission is a photograph of a sign that was on the Leave it to the Riesling Trail in the Clare Valley.

It shows what they are trying to do, why they are trying to do it, who is going to be doing it, how, contact numbers and all the responsible authorities backing up that program. There is a scale of responsibility and professionalism that I would really like to see happen on the corridor as a neighbour. That would give me confidence that the corridor is going to be managed through into the future. That is the model that the recreational trail will be taking up with the backing of Dorset Council.

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

Beyond that, my view, from understanding and being part of a community, is that now, and with this inquiry as well, things have moved on a bit. When we were first looking at the possibility of putting in a recreation trail, it was that or do nothing. Those were the options on the table. Since then the option of rail has come along. What I have seen, in my community, the Lilydale area and more broadly, is a lot of interest and expectation built up in the community over these two options. This tells me emphatically that there is a huge level of expectation something will happen to that corridor. It will not be left alone, it will not be let back into the ownership of local landowners. To me, my neighbours and all the people I talk to, the Mole Creek option really is off the table. Community expectation out there is something is going to happen to this corridor, be it rail or trail. That is one thing I would like to see this inquiry consider. It would be enormously clarifying to all of us involved in this project to see what is going to happen to this project, whether it be rail or trail. It is enormously important to all of us. The zero option is off the table.

Other experiences with rail trails. We have lived in the UK; we have seen it almost become the default. That is what happens to disused railways - they tend to be converted into rail trails. Indeed, it is such an important part of the British landscape now, all these rail trails have come under an overarching body in the UK called Sustrans, which looks after them all and manages them very professionally. Not only because they are there, but because they are such a bonus, such a resource for local people. I have spent a lot of time on those, seeing all sectors of society using these trails, whether to walk their dogs, to take exercise, cycle, go to school, but above all to get free, safe and open access to the countryside.

In Australia my wife and I have ridden the Riesling and Rattler Trail, also the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail in Victoria. I believe this inquiry may be taking a visit to one of those. Is that correct?

CHAIR - Possibly.

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Mr SCOTT - I would seriously recommend it. My belief is that had there already been a long-distance rail trail in Tasmania, this inquiry would not be happening. That is because I have heard a many issues about landowners being afraid of what might happen when the public gets access to the corridor. I have heard about theft, invasion, nuisance, all these sorts of things.

It does not happen. You go on those trails, it does not happen. The reason being once they start getting used to it, you have this issue called passive surveillance. The more people use it, the undesirables leave it. Indeed, there are aspects of those trails that tell me how comfortable the landowners and the communities are with them. I distinctly remember on section of the Riesling and Rattler Trail, cycling beside between two farms, a grazing property on one side, a vineyard on the other. Hectares of vines stretching up hills, only something was missing. Between the trail and those vines there was no fence. That property had taken the fences out between the trail and the vineyards. Why? Certainly not because they are afraid of theft or nuisance, simply because they were doing what most of the properties along the line did. They were throwing their arms open and saying welcome - 'Welcome to ye travellers, come and see our property. See what we are so proud of.' Indeed, the banner in front of that particular vineyard on the trail side is bigger than on the main road on the other side of their property. Why? Because so much of their business comes from the rail trail. Why do they like the trail? Because you get this gradual trickle of customers. You do not get them arriving in a bus or a train load all at once that they cannot manage. What it gives them is the time for these people who are happy to linger and spend time in their vineyard or in their cellar door, so they can talk to them about the provenance of their product. Talk to them in depth. That drives not only onward sales in terms of the internet sales, but it also sells the region. They have time to talk to these people.

Another aspect, particularly, on a recent trail told me how much the trail had become ingrained, particularly with the landowners of the region - their art installations along there. At one place, there are stones beautifully carved into barrels of all sizes. An expensive art installation put there by whom? By the local vintners' association.

At the other end of one terminus is an installation of metal sheep, a shepherd, his dog. Again, an expensive and live installation put there by whom? The local graziers' association.

Are these people who are inimical to a rail trail? Certainly not. It is part of the society. It has become fully integrated into what they do and to those communities. They recognise the value of it. Not just to their businesses, but to the communities around them. That is why I say that if we had a long-stage rail trail going for a while, you would see that. You would see the entrepreneurs would come with businesses grown around the rail trail and really this inquiry would not be necessary.

Of course, I would like to see a rail trail there for some other benefits. The social, health, amenity benefits. The free access to the countryside. The economic opportunities that happen not only at simple nodes where trains stop or in villages, but all the way down the line. When I travelled the Riesling or Murray to Mountains trails, what did I see? Little businesses all the way down, whether it be accommodation, vineyards, produce cafes, hospitality -you name it, it is all there. Even the family that has a few spare eggs to sell. It is all economic activity putting money directly into the economy of those communities and is vital. When you multiply each of those little businesses by the whole length of the line, you can understand what an impression it has on those areas. The Murray to Mountains and Riesling trails have 40 000 to 60 000 visitors a year. The projections for the rail trail here are around 30 000. They are really quite conservative in comparison.

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I would like to see the rail trail put in place because of some of the demographic changes I see in my community. Forty, 50 years ago employment in Lilydale would probably have been about 70 per cent in the surrounding rural enterprises. It is probably around 10 per cent now. What you have is a community both within, but slightly detached from those businesses, those land holdings, around them. I would like to see something that helps integrate both. This is quite an important subject for me, having seen what has happened in Lilydale in recent years, where a fair few issues have divided the community, usually down the same fracture lines. The rail trail is something that could start breaking up some of those fracture lines, by putting in something that people have free and continuous access to right through the countryside.

When riding those other trails, I talked to many proprietors of those businesses and people who have run on the boards of volunteer groups and every single one of them has said without exception, at the same stage the North-East Rail trail project finds itself in now, their projects had a lot of opposition, usually from the same sectors of society. Since they have been put in place, those sectors have now become, if not passive, but certainly supporters and you can see that in terms of the art installations like the one I mentioned, with the graziers putting a lot of money into the art installation on one of those rail trails.

In summary, I have seen other rail trails and have ridden a lot of heritage rail operations and what do I think is the best answer for this corridor? Unequivocally, a rail trail. I love the passion I hear about trains, I love the history being brought up and bred around trains, but realistically, when I look at the numbers, the practicality and what the benefits to the community are going to be, I can only look at and recommend the rail trail. Certainly, as a neighbouring landowner, I want the management and the professionalism that I see on other rail trails brought to this corridor. As I said, had there been a long-distance rail trail ready here in Tasmania, I don't believe this inquiry would be taking place. I think we would have a rail trail along the north-east corridor already. Thank you for listening to me and if you have questions, I am more than happy to answer.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

Mr ARMSTRONG - With that corridor you are talking about, you are saying that the rail trail people would keep the gorse et cetera under control, but wouldn't that also happen if a tourist railway went in there - you would get the same result, with it being maintained?

Mr SCOTT - I would like to think there would be the same result, but can I trust there to be the same result? The answer is no because the rail trail would have the backing of a regulatory authority in the Dorset Council that understands the management of byways and roads and has have the experience and expertise to bring to the organisation to make sure it happens and the regulations are followed well.

I've looked at the other proposals and frankly I cannot have the confidence that there will be the manpower and the resources brought to bear on what is actually not a core activity of a rail operation. When I looked around and researched the other heritage rail operations around the country, and looked at some of the histories of what's happened to them recently, South Gippsland Railway is an absolute classic in this. The volunteers have wonderful enthusiasm and it is terrific, but what they want to concentrate on is providing a rail service, an excursion, and maintaining heritage rolling stock. The management of a corridor is not a core issue and it tends to be the one that acts as a big anchor and literally drags down a lot of these operations.

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You will see in South Gippsland, some of the comments made by supervisors of that line when it failed in 2016 were that regulation - and that includes the regulation on how to maintain the corridor to a correct standard - was going upwards just at the time when their volunteer base was going down. The volunteer base in heritage rail is the same here as it is there in that it tends to be very much the higher end of the age range. That is a sad fact, but it is true. I've been to meetings of the rail proponents here - I'm no spring chicken, but I'd be comfortably in the lowest quartile of age in there. That means to me, as a neighbour and a property owner looking at the long term, if I'm looking at a project that needs to go in place, that needs to be there not for a few years but for generations, I am looking at what is behind that project in terms of resources right into the future. One is backed up by a council, or it has continuity within that structure, and then I'm looking at a project that is basically going to be run by people who are close to or beyond retirement already. Looking at the history of other heritage railways elsewhere and knowing they have resource depletion in terms of volunteers happening at a very rapid rate, I'm asking myself as a landowner, 'Which one is going to be able to provide me with long-term security on that border?' It is going to be the one that is backed by a council, a regulatory body. It also appeals to younger generations so that within the volunteer groups, there is going to be continuity.

I'm a fan of trains, but I know it doesn't appeal to younger generations, so that continuity is not going to be there and that is something that concerns me deeply.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It has been raised with us, and you have touched on it in your submission, about the people who are going to use this rail trail. We've had many people say that they are worried about the number of people with motorbikes or the people who are going to be on it of a night making a noise and everything. You touched on that, saying that you don't believe that would be an issue.

Mr SCOTT - No, it's the experience of other rail trails that it's not an issue. That is why you see vineyards with no fencing there. It may be that sometimes there is an issue straightaway, but once the trail gets used, that nuisance disappears because there is this passive surveillance. People are out there. Those who want to be miscreants don't want to be seen. Once you have usage on these trails, that rapidly disappears.

Motorbikes don't tend to like them anyway. I have been on the north-east rail trail a few times. I have heard bikes up in the bush. That is where they want to be, not on a nice flat, even surface. It is not challenging. That has definitely been the experience.

If you do travel to one of those established rail trails, you will find that out. That is what they will say that the nuisance disappears almost immediately. Crime associated with a rail trail is not an issue.

Mr ARMSTRONG - With Tasmania's climate, and we know what our winters can be like, your rail trail might not get the usage. Could that become a problem when it is not getting the usage?

Mr SCOTT - I doubt it, but I would also have to say anyone who is going to be a nuisance, particularly where it comes to theft and things, there are plenty of roads for them to use and they are far easier to use than the rail trails. My impression would be that winter is not an issue. Rail Trails Australia has already said, and other people who have come here and have experience in setting up rail trails have said, that we actually have an excellent climate and that it would be used

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all year. A lot of the ones on the mainland don't get used all year, particularly because summer becomes too hot. We have an environment where people would want to use it all year, as they do the bike trails a Derby.

Mr DEAN - On that point again, you are not going to have families and older people or any persons walking and riding this track into the evening and so on. If we get illegal use of motorcycles, it is normally always around 8, 9, 10 11 o'clock at night, so you are not going to have that surveillance out then, are you?

Mr SCOTT - No, there won't be. You can have things like passive cameras taking photographs as people go by as a surveillance. Again, my experience, having talked to organisers of these other rail trails, is that it does not happen. That is because the whole aspect of community buy-in to these facilities is that everyone is interested and you have a Neighbourhood Watch-kind of aspect to it where everyone is on the lookout for what is happening on there. It is a shared resource.

Mr DEAN - You talked about the maintenance of the track and, if it is a rail trail, because of local government having some responsibility for it, that it will be maintained. The track you have here, the rail trail from here to Billycock Hill, who is currently responsible for the maintenance of that track?

Mr SCOTT - It is managed by the Rotary Club here in Scottsdale.

Mr DEAN - That is a good point. This morning we were told by Rotary that it is going to have difficulties in relation to the maintenance of that track because its numbers are dwindling and a number of issues will surface. What do you make of that comment?

Mr SCOTT - We talked to Rotary and as a neighbour I am aware of that, but I am also a member of the North-East Rail Trail Board. I believe there will be a submission and we will be talking to you separately. That is part of ongoing discussions between Dorset Council, the North-East Recreation Trail Board and Scottsdale Rotary as to how that is going to be resourced going forward.

Mr DEAN - Following from that, currently we have volunteers maintaining this 26.2 kilometre track and doing quite a good job. You are saying that the same sort of volunteer maintenance of a heritage railway is not going to be successful. Why do you say that? It is successful here, so why can't it be successful on the other hand of the rail trail with a heritage train?

Mr SCOTT - Again, it is this demographic issue. I am looking at not only five years. As the landholder I need certainty through generations. I want to see there are attractions that will hold the interest of volunteers and the communities through many years.

What I have seen elsewhere in Australia, and in particular in the history of a lot of these heritage rail operations, is that this volunteer base is dwindling. Yes, there is the Scottsdale Rotary Club, there are clubs like that and they do dwindle, but we will be tying into a much younger generation and that is where we see it. Certainly the feedback to the North-East Recreation Trail Group is very strongly from families and younger people, and we see that as being the resource that we will be tapping into. We have that longevity, that continuous access to volunteers of all ages who will be there in the future to support this project.

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Mr DEAN - You have talked about the numbers of people using rail trails, walkers and bike riders and so on, are you aware of the numbers currently riding and walking from Scottsdale to Billycock rail trail?

Mr SCOTT - No, I do not have any figures for that, personally.

Mr DEAN - Have you asked questions about that? You stated that they are increasing and the numbers are moving forward.

Mr SCOTT - No, the figures in terms of where things are going come from Rail Trails Australia. I am talking much more broadly, saying they are showing numbers elsewhere increasing, not specifically this one. I am not aware of any sort of polling going on or a census on this particular line of track, bearing in mind it is a small, fairly isolated trail. That said, I am interested in it. Every time I drive by or go past, I look out and generally I will see a couple of people out there. I am also aware that it is close to 28 kilometres long and what you can see from the road is probably less than half a kilometre. If you do the maths, if I am seeing someone out there, each person you see out represents another approximately 50 to 55 people you cannot see. On my sort of polling as I go past, that tells me it is used fairly significantly, particularly in peak times of the day.

Mr FARRELL - I was going to ask similar questions to Mr Dean, just about the maintenance of the line. We had a look this morning. There was certainly quite a bit of overgrowth, with blackberries, overhanging trees and regrowth into the corridor, and that is certainly different to how I remember it 30 to 40 years ago when it was maintained by the railway. I want to drill down into your experience on other rail trails around the world. Why is the length of a rail trail important? Does it attract more people the longer it is or is there an ideal length for a rail trail?

Mr SCOTT - From my understanding, yes, there is a kind of ideal, and that would be close to a two to three-day transit. We are talking time. It is not just length. It is about how long it would take someone who wants to spend time in that region to transit the length of that particular trail. The big bonus there is overnight stays. As soon as you have people staying overnight, you get accommodation benefits and hospitality benefits in those local communities. That is where the big bucks come from in terms of injecting money into local communities. That is why when we say 'an ideal length is', and this north-east corridor would be excellent for length in terms of providing something like a three-day transit. Probably more if you are walking.

Mr FARRELL - As far as rail trails maintenance, how is this done in other areas you have visited? Is it done by the local government?

Mr SCOTT - Generally local government just provides support and advice. That is the professional side of the equation. Funding is usually provided by a voluntary group that manages the corridor and their funding comes from sponsorships. If you go to Bright or one of those places, you will see boards all over the place listing all the companies that sponsor the trail. I believe there may be some photographs in my submission. Also, along the trail, when you get to a road crossing or a junction or a point of interest, there will be a sign pointing to the businesses down in that area. They will all be sources of sponsorship and that is basically how they raise their money. They do not charge people to use the trails. Sometimes there may be an honesty box, if you like, at one end for donations. It is a voluntary system. Basically, most of it comes

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from sponsorship, which has been a very successful model for Murray to Mountains and things like the Riesling Trail.

Mr FARRELL - Do local cycling groups get involved with track maintenance and repairs?

Mr SCOTT - As they do here, yes. I believe the Tamar Bike Users Group near Launceston do working bees out here as did the Scottsdale group that used to exist. They would just arrange a Sunday or whatever to do a working bee on these tracks and keep them updated. Again, there is energy out there to do this and it is just a matter of organising committees tapping into that energy.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks, Mike. I am interested in your view on the Government's compromise position that has been put forward. You obviously have a strong support for the bikes and the rail trail, but we have this negotiated or compromise outcome as well before the committee to consider so I am interested in what you think that might look like and whether you think it is workable?

Mr SCOTT - From a personal perspective, I think there is a win/win situation out there somewhere. I do not think that compromise is the one. If this committee is patient, I would like to expand on that in a moment.

As a member of the recreational group, I am happy to support it as a way of breaking the logjam but I think there needs to be compromise. I am getting big community feedback, whether through the Lilydale Progress Association or elsewhere, that people expect something to happen now and they are over it. They are over the debate. They are over all of this. They want something to happen. They see an opportunity for their communities to grow. They want something to happen. They saw that and they see that as an opportunity to break the logjam and just get things happening so there is that level of support. Is it the best one? Personally, no I do not think so. I think there are other win/win situations out there.

Ms RATTRAY - For instance?

Mr SCOTT - If you can bear with me.

CHAIR - You have 10 minutes. We were 10 minutes late starting.

Mr SCOTT - I will try not to be too long with this because I have thought about it. I have spent a lot of time thinking about this. I am deeply passionate about the subject.

Ms RATTRAY - You are not on your own.

Mr SCOTT - Sure. I know and it is wonderful. That energy there and it is how we tap into it that is going to be key to this.

Every time I think about it there is one image, one memory that really comes back to me, that just seems to encapsulate everything we are talking about. When I lived in the UK in Somerset before emigrating out here, I would read the papers and every couple of months there would be this announcement about an event asking for customers. I would put a note in my diary, and on that Sunday I would take my dog, walk across the road, go over the stile, walk a couple of fields onto a bridleway, walk along the bridleway to get to a small country lane, and along that country

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lane walk a couple of hundred yards, and we would get to the parapet of this beautiful old bluestone bridge spanning a section of the Great Western Railway, one of the major arterial railways in the UK, connecting south-east London to the south-west, to Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance.

The dog and I would wait there on the parapet, just looking down at these rails which would disappear about 400 metres in a straight section and bend right through a wood. Sure enough, always on time, which is in complete contrast with the British Rail services that used to run most of the time on that railway, you would see smoke just coming above the trees. About the same time, you would just hear the rails starting to hiss and as the noise built up, this magnificent - I believe it was an Atlantic although rail enthusiasts will probably correct me - but an Atlantic Class loco with full burnished black, green and gold Great Western livery would come around the corner pulling six magnificently restored wooden Pullman carriages.

The sight was absolutely magnificent. It would just bear down on me and the dog. The rails would start singing under the weight of this massive locomotive, and it would just come under us under the bridge and our world would disappear in this sooty, steamy, humid hot miasma and the ground would be shaking. The noise of metal on metal wheels on rails, it was just absolutely deafening. The whole experience visceral.

That memory comes back to me every time. I get trains. I really get trains, but is that what we want for this line? To me, it is no, absolutely not, for two good reasons and this is where that image comes to me: how do I get to that railway? I'm a Pom - sorry about that - but one of the things I loved about the country I used to live in is the free, unfettered access to the countryside. I could go across that road, over the stile and walk. It is something I cannot do here. Is it important to everyone there? It is something that just has existed; it is historical, embedded in the countryside - free and complete access everywhere, footpaths, bridleways, they are there. We do not have it here and we really miss this. It makes a completely different culture in terms of how small rural communities relate to the farming enterprises around them.

CHAIR - So your suggestion?

Mr SCOTT - My suggestion is on the other side of the aspect, a rail trail will provide this, which we do not have here, and there is a crying need for it. If you try to stop a footpath in the UK, if anyone tries to block one, all hell breaks loose. That is because they are so well valued by the communities. The other side of it is: what was the rail line the train was going on? Mainline run by British Railways. It can be done. The win-win situation here is TasRail. I spoke with TasRail and there is no technical reason why heritage rail should not run on the mainline. There is no technical reason, it is a matter of will. It is a matter of National Rail Safety Regulator approval, which has to be gained anyway by rail to access the North-East Rail corridor.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought that was a good question.

CHAIR - I have one question for you with regard to Rotary. As Mr Dean mentioned, we heard this morning that Rotary is getting older, with fewer numbers. As you said, perhaps as more people come into your group, they may be able to fill the gap and do the work Rotary is doing now. Rotary also mentioned to us today that it undertakes insurance for the trail. If it is no longer able to fulfil that role, would your group? It is certainly a question I will ask the Dorset Council, but obviously someone needs to cover the legal liability on the trail if Rotary, which is

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covering it under its insurance now, is no longer to undertake this. As you said, we are looking to the future.

Mr SCOTT - I have to qualify that I am not here representing the North-East Recreation Trail.

CHAIR - I understand, but you did mention that.

Mr SCOTT - Yes, indeed. From my understanding, we are negotiating both with Dorset Council and looking at insurance, particularly public liability insurance. There are aspects in place, but I am not over the complete details.

CHAIR - It is always one of the things that sits in the way of many.

Mr SCOTT - It is very much on the agenda and has been in the negotiation between us. I am not over the details because it is not my purview within the group, but it is definitely on that table.

Mr FARRELL - To clarify, your group is a Lilydale-based group?

Mr SCOTT - There are multiple groups. I am involved with the Lilydale District Progress Association. It is not my group; I am a member and have been for a while. The North-East Recreational Trail Incorporated is a volunteer community-based group that will be looking to take on the management of the rail trail, when it is established. Dorset Council will be the manager of the corridor, but NERT will be basically the day-to-day manager of the recreational trail as an entity.

I believe NERT will be making a separate submission before this inquiry later, so those questions are better put to the whole board.

Mr DEAN - In your submission you talk about Derby and what is happening there and the increase, yes, but mountain bike trails are significantly different to rail trails. In fact, there is no real comparison between the two. One, the mountain trail is thrill-seeking uphill, downhill riding and all of that sort of stuff, whereas the rail trail is significantly different. Have you looked at the difference when you talk about all of increased activity in Derby, the increase in prices of houses you talked about? I think there might be a difference of opinion there, but anyway.

Mr SCOTT - I love my mountain bike. I also ride trails.

Mr DEAN - That is great. You are not equating that with the rail trail, are you?

Mr SCOTT - It is not the same demographic to me. I love my mountain bike. I love those trails and I use them all around the place, but my family does not so when we travel, we go on rail trails.

I have seen and talked to a lot of people in Derby who would be more than happy - they had spent three days on a rail trail ending up in the area, moved on to Derby and had the fun. It is part of a mixed experience.

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In terms of the business, I am really emphasising that when there is the opportunity, when you have something either like Derby or something like a rail trail which brings visitors, there is no shortage of entrepreneurs here in this community prepared to jump on board and start businesses.

Mr DEAN - We are running short of time. Where did you get your figures from about the increases in the uses of rail trails that you mentioned at the beginning of your evidence today? Where did you get your numbers from? You do not know what is currently on the Scottsdale to Billycock Trail, so where did you get your numbers from?

Mr SCOTT - From Rail Trails Australia, from its people, websites and discussions. It have made a submission.

Mr DEAN - Specifically, Tasmania. Any information from Tasmania?

Mr SCOTT - We do not have a long-distance rail trail in Tasmania. If we did -

Mr DEAN - We have Scottsdale to Billycock.

Mr SCOTT - It is not a long distance. It is only 28 kilometres and is less than one day. It is a nice family excursion. The other side of this is that it is a great prototype showing how it can be done, but it does not have what is key to the rail trails you visit elsewhere in Australia. That is, it does not go through the settled regions, where you have people prepared to come in and start businesses.

Mr DEAN - You said also in your submission that it will encourage business activity all the way along the trail, creating a boost in economic activity. What do you mean by that? Boost activity, business activity all the way along the trail.

Mr SCOTT - That is exactly what I said earlier. I visited rail trails elsewhere and that is what I saw - cafes, accommodation.

Mr DEAN - Building on the rail trail you are saying?

Mr SCOTT - These are basically about the rail trail. You talk to the proprietors of those businesses and you ask them what is the rail trail to you, most of them say that it is a boon for their business and a number of them actually say it is their mainstay.

You have cafes all along there. If you talk about up to 40 000 or 50 000 visitors a year on some of those trails, it is not surprising they have a business out of it. People who are on bikes are going to stop at will and if there is an opportunity to choose a café, that is a great temptation and they do. I have been there and that is my experience.

Mr DEAN - Thanks, Mike.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We very much appreciate you coming in and spending your time to add to your submission.

Mr SCOTT - Thank you for listening to me and giving me this opportunity.

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THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr GREG HOWARD, MANAGER, DORSET COUNCIL, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming in and welcome to our public hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege but I need to remind you that any comments you make outside may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. We will ask that you give a short overview of your submission and members will then ask some questions. We are seeking information specifically relating to the terms of reference.

If you would like to start off and then members can ask you some questions.

Mr HOWARD - Our submission was based on, first, our proposal but more so on the issues associated with the heritage rail proposal. We are aware that the aims of the committee are to prove the feasibility of both proposals. It is our personal belief that the feasibility of the rail trail has been well and truly proved through the application for the grant by the federal department through the National Stronger Regions Fund and then, second, through the Treasury report which everyone has.

As part of that, Treasury noted that the Dorset Council is suitably qualified to deliver both the project and undertake the maintenance of our rail trail. We indicated we will support the compromise proposal suggested by the state Government, albeit that it is not our ideal scenario, but in the interests of getting something happening and giving both groups an opportunity to progress their projects. We believe that at least the heritage rail group should have an opportunity to have a go.

In doing so, we realise that the loss of those kilometres from the Lilydale Falls back to Coldwater Creek has taken the gloss off our proposal somewhat. It has taken away a day's ride and a night's accommodation for the Lilydale area. It has also taken away some of the very good tourism products available west of Lilydale. Unfortunately, those tourism operators are probably going to lose out. Because of the inflexibility of a train timetable and schedule, many of those businesses will not have the opportunity for the train to stop at their business. Some of those businesses are some distance from the rail line and while you can probably access it reasonably easily on a bike, I doubt people are going to walk for a couple of kilometres off the train to go and visit them. I think that is a downside.

With the loss of those kilometres, we are back to just below 70 kilometres. That would be the absolute minimum we think we could build a rail trail that would be sustainable, including the 28 kilometres already built from here to the top of the Billycock Hill.

From our point of view and looking at rail trails around Australia, we are looking at the ideal distance being 100 kilometres. That usually amounts to a three- or four-day ride depending on the group and usually a four-night stay and sometimes five. You will find that some of the demographic that uses rail trails are young families with smaller children. They are probably going to ride less than 20 kilometres a day and they are going to be saying, 'Are we there yet?' a long time before they get to the 20 kilometres, I reckon.

CHAIR - Twenty kilometres is a long way.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -
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Mr HOWARD - It is a long way, yes. It is the absolute minimum distance we have been left with, but we still think we can make that work. The other absolutely vital part for us is that the trail has to start in a town. The only town between Launceston and Scottsdale of note is Lilydale, so we have to get a start in the town of Lilydale. We have had discussions with the Government on how we might get a track from the township of Lilydale to the Lilydale Falls. That is reasonably achievable for not too much money, and then on to the rail trail.

I noticed the previous speaker was talking about development along the rail trail line. We've already had quite a bit of interest from landowners who already own land next to the line suggesting that they might want to start some sort of business.

In October 2017 I went to Omeo and Lakes Entrance in Victoria to speak at some cycling conferences. They have a number of very successful rail trails in Victoria. Two things came out of talking to the adjacent landowners -

- First, when it was first proposed they were very strongly against it. They had all the same concerns that local farmers and residents have had here. The promising thing was that none of them have ever happened and they haven't happened anywhere in the world. While I can understand why people might think that, they just don't happen because the demographic that rides the rail trail are not antisocial people. You don't have issues with them.
- Second, some of the landowners who were very much against the rail trail in the very beginning actually set up their own businesses. Now you have farmers who are selling fruit and vegetables, wine and honey and whatever. It's a bit like anywhere where you go on a holiday, you don't necessarily carry everything that you buy; in fact, on a bike you carry as little as possible. Things like wine you just order and it is probably delivered to your home before you even get home, so that is a real bonus. That does happen along rail trails. There is probably a bit of a gap in the product once you get past Lebrina anyway. There are a couple of wineries at Lebrina and there is a shop there, but between there and Scottsdale at the moment, there would be a lack of product. We imagine that some of those areas would fill up reasonably quickly.

I know Mr Ravens gave evidence yesterday, which was rather amusing, seeing as the letter he wrote to support the rail trail in the first place contradicts pretty much everything he said yesterday, but he probably sits in the ideal position. If he wanted to, he could go and pick people up off the rail trail, take them to his business, where he intends to build accommodation units, wine them, dine them, cart them back and put them on rail trail the next morning and away they go. He would be in the perfect position if he chose to do that.

We are fully aware that heritage trains traditionally lose money. There are very few heritage train services anywhere in Australia that make a profit. We know the one in Kuranda near Cairns does. That is because if you want to go up to the Daintree rainforest in Cairns, the only way to get there is to go on the train; you don't have any other options. Even in Tasmania, if you look at the Ida Bay Railway, which basically a few years ago said that they wanted to take the railway over and they were truly sustainable, just recently spoke to the state Government about \$2 million to do basic maintenance, not capital improvements, but basic maintenance. We know that the West Coast Wilderness Railway has had \$4.5 million pumped in for three years for capital works. They

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reckon they are okay for a couple of years, but they have admitted that they will need money again by 2020-21.

Traditionally, those losses have been covered by local governments or state governments. Even in Victoria, where Puffing Billy this year might have just broken even because I don't think it did any capital works; it traditionally loses money and is propped up by the Victorian government. They have 5 million people sitting on their doorstep more or less in the City of Melbourne, with a growth rate of 100 000 people a year.

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

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

The price for the upgrade for the railway line was quoted by Raylink at \$16 million. I do not know if you know much about Raylink, but they are probably one of the most reputable track consultants in Australia. They are used by most of the state rail bodies to do a lot of their work. That \$16 million-worth of work has come about over a 15-year non-use period of the railway line. If you do the rough sums, it is around \$1 million a year that it has deteriorated and would continue to deteriorate. At the same time 15 000 sleepers need replacing.

Mr DEAN - You are saying it would continue to deteriorate at \$1 million a year?

CHAIR - If not used.

Mr DEAN - Yes, I am just making sure.

Mr HOWARD - Based on the fact that over the last 15 years it has deteriorated to the point where it needs \$16 million to fix it up, simple arithmetic tells us it is deteriorating at.

We know a couple of bridges need replacing at the moment and others are in pretty bad order and they will be big numbers. Karoola Bridge will take a lot - I tried to walk across it and I was

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only halfway across when I chickened out. It is in very poor order. We know the Wyena bridge need full replacement.

There is a lot of work to be done -15 000 sleepers need replacing, which is 1000 sleepers a year for -

Mr DEAN - How many?

Mr HOWARD - Fifteen thousand sleepers need replacing, according to the Raylink report. Roughly that means 1000 sleepers a year have been deteriorating and you would imagine they would continue to deteriorate at a similar rate.

With voluntary labour, it would probably be a job for two to three people permanently just replacing sleepers. Most of the people who are going to replace the sleepers, given the volunteer base the group has, are not going to change too many sleepers in a day. All of the other work the heritage rail group has said it can do a lot less than \$16 million. I concede it may be able to do some of that with voluntary labour, but the reality is that although they will save some money, they are not going to save huge amounts of money, and it will take them a long time to do that.

The Yarra Valley Railway in Victoria has spent over \$8 million in 10 years on 13 kilometres of track and they still do not have it up to speed.

The other labour option the heritage rail group put forward is that it would use the work for the dole program as a labour source. Obviously the issues with that are, first, training and supervision, and, second, we have a federal election coming up in a few months and the Labor Party which is \$1.05 to win at the current time has already said that as part of its policy the work for the dole program will go. That is Labor's current policy. The heritage rail group's labour option all of a sudden has gone out the window.

Whatever savings they think they may be able to make and have talked about making, and whatever improvements they could do to the track themselves, they do not have any say in it. Obviously the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator makes that decision, so it will decide the standards for the track, sidings, bridges and level crossings. I know for a fact that the last time when the heritage rail put its submission it had not spoken in detail to the National Rail Safety Regulator. I have had a detailed discussion with him and I know exactly where he sits on a lot of the issues they think they can do. I did have a question for the committee from that point of view, on whether the committee intended to speak to the National Rail Safety Regulator, because I would find it difficult to think you could make an informed decision without having that discussion with him.

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

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

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The risk associated with a large truck or a bus or even a car running into a freight train is that you may kill the train driver and you may kill a couple of occupants in the vehicle, but the risk of a 60-tonne log truck, milk tanker or gravel truck running into a passenger carriage is a lot greater.

Even some of the rail crossings actually had bells and whistles. Down the road at Lietinna is a perfect example. Even with bells and lights in place, it still has a history of trucks running into trains. That is because trucks come over the brow of a hill at 80 to 100 kilometres - the lights are flashing, but it does not make any difference because they cannot pull up. That means additional signage may be required.

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

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

Our estimation - and it is only an estimation because we haven't studied the new standards in detail - is we would be spending hundreds of thousands of dollars as a road authority to upgrade the approaches to level crossings. Then there would be the yearly cost of maintenance - that is, vegetation management as well maintenance of signs and road markings.

Finally, there were suggestions the community strongly supported the heritage rail proposal. You are all politicians so you know this: there is only one poll that counts, and that poll was the local government election.

We had six candidates supporting the heritage rail, only two of whom were elected to council. We had eight candidates supporting the cycling proposal, seven of whom were elected to council. The community has spoken on that quite clearly.

That is basically it, but I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr FARRELL - Thank you. Mayor, on a related issue: as far as there have been discussions recently about roads around the Sidling for heavy freight trucks for B-doubles, has the council had any discussions with TasRail or the state Government about using rail to get heavy produce from the north-east?

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Mr HOWARD - Freight rail fell over in the north-east for a couple of major reasons. One is that the actual railway line was not fit for purpose. It is an extremely winding line and with very long trains, the basic laws of physics tell you that when a train goes around a very long corner, it wants to pull straight. There were times towards the end of the freight service when they were carting logs to Longreach that they were averaging a derailment about every 10 days. That was one reason.

The second reason is that with the advent of B-doubles and increased truck rates - and, of course, now we are looking at actual road trains, the distance you can travel with a loaded truck once you have loaded it is quite significant compared to the cost of taking that load to a railhead, unloading it off the truck, placing it on a train and then repeating the process at the other end at the destination. You have those two extra shifts, which they all cost money - and they cost a lot of money. Once you are loaded with a B-double or -triple of freight, you can probably go a couple of hundred kilometres before rail can be competitive in terms of trying to compete on price.

In answer to your question, Craig: we have not had the discussion with TasRail. We have a letter from TasRail that says it can see no future scenario when freight would be viable out of the north-east. TasRail wrote that in its submission. It also said in its submission that it would probably need to remove the rails and the sleepers themselves - first, to do remedial work on the formation and, second, if it were ever to occur that a major industry required bulk movement of material out of the north-east, it might look at a different configuration of rail. No, we have not. Most of the produce that comes out of the north-east, I would say is probably unsuitable for the rail.

Mr FARRELL - What would the cost of a new road be, just so we have got some sort of an idea?

Mr HOWARD - The cost of a new road over the Sidling? Our costings at the moment have come in at \$44 million, and that is from Minstone Road in Scottsdale to St Patricks River on the other side of the Sidling. With a contingency built in, we think we can get it done for less than \$50 million.

Mr DEAN - To follow up on Craig's question about the use of trains for logs and so on, exactly that same statement was made about transporting from Bridgewater to Launceston two years ago. They said three years ago that it would never occur again - they would not bring logs on trains from the south, 200 kilometres. You said that B-doubles were taking them. Now, as you would be aware, they are transporting logs in big loads on trains from the south to the north. They have changed their attitude drastically. Do you have any comment on that?

Mr HOWARD - The fact is it is 200 kilometres from the south to the north. It is probably further than that to Longreach but remember they have probably already travelled 100 kilometres as it is on the truck. If you have come out of the Derwent Valley or somewhere like that, you have probably already travelled 100-plus kilometres with the load. If you want to bring it all the way to Longreach, you are talking about a 300- to 350-kilometre trip, and that is where it is possible the rail freight advantage kicks in.

Mr DEAN - From Bridport to George Town, was it?

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Mr HOWARD - I do not know. I would imagine it is 250 kilometres.

Mr DEAN - Yes, true. How much work has the council done on assessing the condition of the track? You talk a lot about the condition of the track and the condition of the bridges, but what have you done as a council? Have you assessed that in any way or are you relying on the reports that have been done?

Mr HOWARD - Clearly we do not have any expertise in that area. We have an engineer but he is not a rail engineer so we have relied solely on the expertise of Raylink which is, as I said, one of the most reputable track consultants in the country. We are very happy to take its advice on that.

Mr DEAN - I think you would be aware that the heritage rail group's position is that Karoola bridge, which you referred to, will be repaired and brought back to good condition on a donation basis. You would be aware of that, wouldn't you?

Mr HOWARD - I am aware it has proposed something. It does not have anything in place because, first, the group has not spoken to the rail regulator about whether what it proposes may actually be acceptable and, second, I do not know if you ever been to Karoola Bridge, but it is a long way from Karoola Bridge to the ground. I suggest the requirements for working at those sorts of heights would be beyond the capabilities of the rail group.

Mr DEAN - As mayor, have you spoken to the heritage rail people at all recently?

Mr HOWARD - Not recently. I attended a meeting at Lebrina, where I was threatened with a number of things.

Mr DEAN - You were threatened?

Mr HOWARD - Myself and the fellow landowners - sorry, the actual rail trail proposal was threatened with violence, damage and whatever, and I thought, 'Well, if that is how they want to act, I will not go back'.

Mr DEAN - I could question the mayor all day long, but I have another one at this stage.

CHAIR - I do not know we have too many other questions.

Mr DEAN - I am interested in some of the evidence he has given. My other question is in relation to the derailments. You have said they average one every 10 days. The information I have is that is not accurate at all, so where did you get the information from?

Mr HOWARD - In the short period before they closed the rail down, every week in the paper you would read about a derailment on the north-east line.

Mr DEAN - The information you gave us in your evidence you gained from the papers?

Mr HOWARD - Mostly, yes.

Mr DEAN - Basically from the paper, there was a derailment on average every 10 days?

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Mr HOWARD - Just about every week you picked the paper up, there would be a derailment on the north-east line. Remember it is some time ago. We are talking 20 years ago.

Mr DEAN - That will still be on record, because I think it is disputed by a number of people.

Mr ARMSTRONG - The funding you receive, mayor, from the state Government: can you tell me where that is at now?

Mr HOWARD - From the federal government?

Mr ARMSTRONG - Federal government.

Mr HOWARD - The funding in its current form. All invoices to access funding have to be completed by June 2020, which means the work will need to be completed by the early part of 2020. We will be, because of circumstances beyond our control, mucking around with this for a number of years. Originally, we thought it would be an 18-month build, the entire length of the line, but we started back two or three years ago - four years ago now. We are certainly being pushed for time and it is probable, given we still have to go through appointment of the corridor manager and then the planning process, that the time frame will become extremely difficult to meet. We will be looking for an extension of funds or a transfer of the funds to another program.

CHAIR - Do you think there will be sufficient funds? Is it the \$1.47 million in funds Dorset Council is matching? Do you think with the delays, it will be sufficient, or do you think you will need considerably more funding?

Mr HOWARD - First, if the compromise solution went through, we would be losing roughly a third of the line, so I am assuming we would lose a third of the money, so we are probably back to around \$1 million. When we put the initial funding application in, one of the largest costs was actually picking the ballast, which is the blue metal on top, picking it up, carting it away, having it crushed and then carting it back and laying it back on the rail trail. Since we lodged the submission, and prior to the construction of the line from Scottsdale out to Tonganah, we found a mobile crusher that drives along and crushes the material as you go and lays it back down, and all we do is grade and roll it back down. We imagine the savings could be in the order of \$600 000 for the remaining part of the track.

CHAIR - You do not think any additional funding will be required?

Mr HOWARD - No, we think that -

CHAIR - You will not be coming to the government asking for money?

Mr HOWARD - No, and as the mayor I am very confident that if Dorset Council has to put money in to complete the project, that would not be an issue.

CHAIR - You mean over and above the \$1.47 million?

Mr HOWARD - We will not be putting that much in. Our contribution will be funded mainly by the sale of the rail and sleepers. Our original assumption was this would fund our

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contribution and we would not have to put any in. If we did have to put some in, I do not have an issue with Dorset Council having to put in money. Keeping in mind council's role to provide recreational, tourism and economic development opportunities. We have done so with Derby, which is a perfect example of where we put council funds in to get it up off the ground. We have just spent \$500 000 on a playground at Bridport, we spend hundreds of thousands on caravan parks and we are spending \$5 million on a swimming pool, so we would have no issues at all with having to put some additional funds in to complete a project as valuable as this.

Mr FARRELL - On that, with the sale of rail and sleepers, it was my belief that after we had put the strategic infrastructure corridor bill through the parliament, the Government was going to bank the rails and sleepers.

Mr HOWARD - After the corridor managers are appointed, anyone wishing to use the rail - another railway - may apply to use some of the rail. In the event that happened, it would not concern us because they would also have to pay the removal costs for that rail and they would have to remove that rail within six months. The rest of the rail is banked, that is true, but it is at the discretion of the minister as to what he does with that rail. We have an agreement going right back to the beginning that the rail would be donated to council and we would be able to sell it.

Mr FARRELL - And that was with the Minister for Infrastructure?

Mr HOWARD - Yes. It was before my time.

Mr FARRELL - There has been talk - and we have had different people before us who have mentioned the sealing of the rail trail. Is that something the council is planning to do?

Mr HOWARD - If you guys want to put it in as a recommendation and someone is going to pay for it, we would be happy to do that. If you look at rail trails on the mainland, some are sealed and some aren't. The surface we have currently from Scottsdale out to Tonganah to the top of the Billycock is probably a little coarser than we would have liked. That is a matter of simply slowing down the crushing plant and we can achieve a much finer seal.

Mr FARRELL - Finally, in your submission - and this is more of a general question - the statement is -

The concept of heritage rail extending as far as Wyena and as far as Scottsdale is fundamentally flawed from the sustainability perspective and in many respects is a selfish and ill-conceived concept that has absolutely no regard for its impact on other tourism products or existing heritage rail product.

Some would say that could also be said about the bicycle track proposal. I am wondering how you, as the mayor of a local government area, will move forward in the future to try to bring the community back together. I have picked up on quite a lot of division over the different proposals and quite a lot of passion from both sides will have to be quelled.

Mr HOWARD - I think we would be naïve to think we can please everyone at any level of government. The comment about putting at risk other heritage rail proposals was in reference mainly to the West Coast Wilderness Railway where, as I said earlier, tourists who come to Tasmania and decide to go on a heritage rail trip will probably only go on one. If you were a

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tourist who was not a rail enthusiast and you got off the plane in Launceston or you jumped off the boat in Devonport and you had to make a decision between driving three hours to the west coast to jump on the West Coast Wilderness Railway, even though as a scenic railway it would be vastly superior, versus jumping on one in Launceston and spending half a day there, I think you would find that a lot of people would take the easier option and jump on the one closest to Launceston. In the event the West Coast Wilderness Railway, for the next couple of years, breaks even, but in most years it loses money, a loss of patronage. You would think that would be a significant disadvantage, not only to the railway itself but also to the West Coast Wilderness Railway, which is an iconic tourist attraction on the west coast. A lot of other tourist product on the west coast feeds off the fact that the West Coast Wilderness Railway is there. Any loss of patronage for that railway, I would imagine, would be detrimental to the whole tourism economy of the west coast of Tasmania.

Ms RATTRAY - Greg, we heard today that the council had sent a letter to the Launceston City Council asking it to reconsider its position, which it arrived at after a long time, in regard to extending the compromise position of the rail and bike out to Lilydale, asking for it to go to their boundary at Wyena. Have you had a response in regard to that?

Mr HOWARD - No, we've had no response from the council. The reason we sent the letter was that it was our view that the councillors of Launceston City Council were forced to make an ill-informed decision in that, if you read through the agenda item relating to that motion, it suggested that the heritage rail be extended to Lilydale and that the rail trail be supported to go back to Lilydale Falls, but it didn't make any suggestion as to how that might occur. If you were to extend the heritage rail to the boundary at Wyena and to make the rail trail work as well, you would then have to co-locate the trail within the rail corridor. Once again, referring to the Raylink report, it suggested the total co-location of both projects for the entire length of the line was around \$50 million; with \$16 million allocated to rehabilitation of the train line, that leaves \$34 million to co-locate a rail trail within the corridor, which works out at about \$530 000 a kilometre. Over the 14-and-a-bit kilometres that exist between Lilydale Falls and Wyena, it works out at about \$7 million.

I would have thought \$7 million on something like that would be a suitable spend of public money. You also have the issue that when you get to the tunnel, there is no room inside the tunnel to co-locate a rail trail and the actual train line. That means you would have to divert around the tunnel, which means it will take you up onto the tunnel road and then back down the Golconda Road, a distance of four-and-a-bit kilometres, which is not the idea of a rail trail because you are aiming at that steady gradient of two to three degrees. It is quite a steep climb out of there. The other advantage of having a rail trail is that you don't have to tangle with traffic, and you would certainly have to tangle with traffic in that option. That is why we wrote the letter in the first place, but the answer is no, we've had no reply.

Ms RATTRAY - You said that it is ideal to have a trail start at a town. Would Lebrina work? Again, we are looking for a compromise position here.

Mr HOWARD - No, because you would hope it would start -

Ms RATTRAY - It would help Lebrina.

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Mr HOWARD - It would, but the trail going through Lebrina would equally help Lebrina. The idea is you want the trail to start in a town that already has some tourism product in place. While we accept the tourism product will build, at the moment there is a shop in Lebrina and that's about it. There is no accommodation close by.

Ms RATTRAY - There's a hall.

Mr HOWARD - There's a hall, but unless you want to sleep like a backpacker in the hall, there is no accommodation close by. Lilydale has substantial amount of accommodation and it has decent tourist products in terms of wineries, eateries and things like that, so that's why Lilydale would be the minimum option for us.

Ms RATTRAY - There is a very nice winery at the top of the Lebrina Hill.

Mr HOWARD - Yes, there is, but once again, the further you move this way, the shorter the trail gets, and the shorter the trail gets, the less attractive it becomes to international and interstate visitors.

Ms RATTRAY - How much shorter would that be?

Mr HOWARD - That's another seven kilometres, it might even be more than that. It's not that far from Lebrina through to the Wyena boundary, so it might even be eight or nine kilometres. I haven't actually measured it.

Ms RATTRAY - I was interested in whether the Launceston City Council has had another look at support for finally coming up with something - very impressed.

CHAIR - I want to ask you about insurance. We heard this morning from the Rotary Club that it covers the insurance on the track, but we also heard that it is a diminishing group, an older group. If for some reason they couldn't continue, would the Dorset Council be able to take over the insurance? Does that come under your umbrella already or not?

Mr HOWARD - If we were appointed corridor manager, we would be appointed the corridor manager, as I understand it, to Tonganah and the piece from Tonganah to the top of Billycock is state forest at the moment and on a lease arrangement. Yes, we would be happy to add that to our insurance policy because it would be just an infinitesimal -

CHAIR - It would be covered over?

Mr HOWARD - Yes, no issues with us taking over the insurance. I know the Rotary Club is having trouble with numbers.

CHAIR - As many do.

Mr HOWARD - That's not unusual for service clubs. Not only are they having trouble with numbers, but they are getting older and becoming less capable. They do have - and I don't know whether they talked about this - a thing called Friends of Rotary.

CHAIR - No, they didn't mention that.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE -
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR INQUIRY 6/2/2019 SCOTTSDALE (HOWARD)**

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Mr HOWARD - Friends of Rotary are people who don't want to go every week to a Rotary meeting but are happy to help them. I'm part of that; I helped them clear their site and felled some trees for them and things like that. A number of people within the community are happy to go through and cut the trees off the line once a week or whenever they normally do it, and do other work for them. Yes, they are a diminishing group as a Rotary group but they have a much broader support base.

Ms RATTRAY - They also use work for the dole people.

Mr HOWARD - Yes, they do on limited occasions. On very limited occasions.

CHAIR - We did hear that might be going.

Mr HOWARD - Yes, it is. If you want to take the \$1.05 -

CHAIR - I would like to give you the opportunity to dispute something that was said today, which was that 'the mayor, Mr Howard, stated there was no need to be compliant with Austroads with some of the trails with insufficient width and adequate drop extending 40 metres'. Do you believe there is a need for trails to comply with Austroads?

Mr HOWARD - No, there isn't and I will give you the reason. The Austroads standard relates to trails beside a public road. It does not relate to any other trails so mountain bike trails or walking trails or any bike trails other than those situated beside a public road.

Ms RATTRAY - Like Listers Lane?

Mr HOWARD - Yes, like Listers Lane. If we were to construct a track from the township of Lilydale to the Lilydale Falls, that part of the track would need to comply with Austroads standards but once you get off the main road and onto the actual rail corridor, there is no requirement for us to be compliant.

CHAIR - So it is 'take it at your own risk' basically?

Mr HOWARD - Clearly there are rules around bridges where the drops are vertical and where you would clearly need to have barrier protection. We have that on, say, Forester Bridge at Tonganah and anywhere we consider there was an unacceptable risk. If it were extremely steep and extremely high, we would look at some sort of fencing but in general there is no requirement.

CHAIR - That is good, thank you.

Mr DEAN - Under a heading in your submission - 'Debunking the myth of maintaining a rail trail' - in the last paragraph there you say this cost burden argument is mischievous and it is easily rebutted when one considers that the existing 28-kilometre - well, it is 26.2 kilometres - Scottsdale rail trail is maintained by the Scottsdale Rotary Club with zero financial contribution from the Dorset Council. The experience of the Scottsdale rail trail provides compelling evidence to support the self-funded maintenance model on which the Lilydale to Scottsdale rail trail is predicated.

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You have heard our Chair talk to you about the Rotary position. If Rotary is not able to continue, and that was an indication given to us this morning that could be the case, who will pick up the maintenance for that track?

Mr HOWARD - The maintenance, as I understand it, is going to be undertaken by the North East Recreational Trail Group. We will be the rail corridor, but we have an agreement with them to undertake the maintenance. The maintenance on rail trails is really very low. I heard the question this afternoon when I sat down, that if volunteer maintenance on that section from here to the top of the Billycock works, why wouldn't volunteer maintenance work on a heritage rail? That is because the heritage rail maintenance was probably 20 or 30 times as much as what there would be on a rail trail. The maintenance on a rail trail is normally a drive through once a week to make sure that no trees or scrubs have blown over and are sitting on the trail itself. A bit of a spray once or twice a year at the outside and basically that is it.

Mr DEAN - I will not go down the path of the maintenance of heritage rail because heritage rail today can be put in because it is light use. It is not trains weighing 25 tonnes. It is a train in this instance that will have, I think, an axle weight of about seven tonnes. Very light rail.

Mr HOWARD - That is not 100 per cent correct.

Mr DEAN - Correct me.

Mr HOWARD - In their submission they talked about the initial carriage being the one you just described with an axle weight of about seven tonnes, but they also talked about running a train which would carry 200 people of a weekend, which would require a locomotive plus carriages. The locomotive plus carriages automatically takes the axle weight up above 20 tonne again. That is my understanding.

Mr DEAN - That is what is in their submission. Thank you for that. What businesses will miss out because of the heritage rail?

Mr HOWARD - I would not imagine too many people would be jumping off the train while it is still moving, to go to the Leaning Church Vineyard, for instance, or even if it pulled up -

Mr DEAN - You are being a bit facetious. The train will stop at businesses. We have already been given evidence that the train will stop at businesses along the path. Tell me: what businesses will miss out?

Mr HOWARD - The Leaning Church Vineyard is two or three kilometres from the railway line. Something like that. I imagine not too many people would get off the train and walk that distance to visit that business.

Mr DEAN - What other businesses?

Mr HOWARD - There are a couple of galleries on that western side. Don't ask me the names of them because I am not an art enthusiast and I haven't taken any notice of them. They are some distance off the rail, but probably quite accessible by bikes and not as accessible by train.

Mr DEAN - Any other businesses?

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Mr HOWARD - I am not 100 per cent.

Mr DEAN - Bridestowe Estate? Would they miss out?

Mr HOWARD - By?

Mr DEAN - Heritage rail.

Mr HOWARD - I don't know that too many people in all honesty. I know Mr Ravens made some comments that were reported in the paper this morning. I wasn't appearing so I don't know exactly what he said. Initially he was highly supportive of the rail trail concept and he wrote in his initial support letter and I will read this section to you -

We have already taken steps to make Bridestowe Estate more bike friendly and are working with many businesses from Launceston to Scottsdale to ensure that we are product-ready for this development.

There is no doubt we will need to employ additional staff once the rail trail has been constructed as we anticipate additional tour groups, families and individuals to explore our lavender farm and premium tourist facilities.

He talked about a large percentage of his tourist numbers being Asian tourists and Asian tourists are what I call 'quick stop tourists'. They are not here for a very long time, and they realise that and they want to pack as much in as they possibly can and they won't want to spend too much time travelling on a slow road to China, as it were.

I imagine that if you were a tourist - doesn't matter where you come from - and you have a hire car and you drive to Turners Marsh, you would not then want to jump out of your hire car, climb on a train, pay \$40 or \$50 a head - whatever the ticket price is going to be, but that is the suggested price - to go to either Golconda or Nabowla railway stations on the train, then get off the train, jump on a shuttle bus, be shuttled into Bridestowe Estate, and then do all the same in reverse when for \$20 and 25 minutes you could have driven your car out there. I don't think too many of the train people will actually take that option if it were constructed.

Mr DEAN - Mr Ravens yesterday said in evidence that in supporting the rail trail, he was misled. He gave that in evidence to this committee that he was misled. He now strongly supports the heritage rail.

Mr HOWARD - It is rather coincidental we had this letter of support but the only time he changed his mind was when the Dorset Council and Mr Ravens had an issue about a planning matter.

Mr DEAN - Mr Ravens said he was misled. I don't know what he was misled by. You are right. Bridestowe said they were putting on shuttle buses and some of the other places have said similar - they will be putting on shuttle buses to get these people if heritage rail does get up, to transport them to their businesses. That is the reason I asked the question: what businesses would miss out?

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Won't it be the same with the rail trail that the bike people will have to ride their bikes into Bridestowe and it is two to three kilometres off the track to ride into Bridestowe, then come back and into the Leaning Church Vineyard as well. Won't they have to do that?

Mr HOWARD - Yes, they will have to get off the rail trail to ride to somewhere like the Leaning Church Vineyard.

Mr DEAN - Won't they all do that?

Mr HOWARD - They won't all do it, but there will be a percentage. With Bridestowe, if Mr Ravens was clever, he would actually send a shuttle out for all those people. Shuttles are one of the big employers in a rail trail scenario.

What happens in most rail trails is the shuttle buses pick you up from your motel in Launceston or off the plane or whatever it is, then they take you and drop you at the start of the trail. They then carry your luggage to wherever you are going to stay on the first night and then return, pick you up, pick your luggage up and take it to your destination for the second night and at the end of the ride either take you back to where you came from or take you to another destination.

Even the Overland Walking Track and Three Peaks Track have benefited significantly from that type of business.

Mr DEAN - I have one question. I am wondering how I should phrase it. You are very supportive and while I understand not all councillors are, the council position very strongly is you support the rail trail. I take it you support all the information, all the evidence, you have been provided with by the consultants and others in your support of the rail trail? Is that a fair position?

Mr HOWARD - We have looked at all the evidence made available to us.

Mr DEAN - And you accept all the evidence?

Mr HOWARD - We accept - where we do not have any expertise somewhat, we cannot ...

Mr DEAN - What evidence do you not accept for the rail trail?

Mr HOWARD - Some of the evidence in the second report, not the Raylink report, but the second report. I cannot remember the name off the top of my head; that was part of the Treasury findings.

Mr DEAN - What do you not accept there?

Mr HOWARD - The second report talked about whether a heritage rail might be feasible, but they said that without any access to the actual costs of rehabilitating the line, and they made their assumptions on evidence provided to them. A perfect example is some of the evidence provided to the consultant was they would be able to get away with \$20 million-worth of public liability, which would cost them \$15 000 a year. The Australian standard for public liability for passenger rail is \$250 million, so if you multiply that, it is a fair bit more.

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Mr DEAN - So there are things you do not accept from the Treasury report in relation to the rail trail?

Mr HOWARD - No, not from the Treasury report; there are things I do not accept in the consultant's report submitted to Treasury.

Mr DEAN - The information you do not accept relates to the heritage rail?

Mr HOWARD - Yes, after discussions with the National Rail Safety Regulator.

Mr DEAN - None of the information related to the rail trail you did not accept? The position I am getting to is that there are two differing reports in relation to feasibility of heritage rail and whether it would stand up. I take it that you accept the report that very clearly says it will not.

Mr HOWARD - I accept the part of the report that says it will cost \$16 million to -

Mr DEAN - Is that fact though? The heritage rail people say the rail trail is not right; that it is a figment of somebody's imagination.

Mr HOWARD - Well, when you get a report from one of the most respected rail consultants in the country, I imagine without any expertise to -

Mr DEAN - It depends who he is doing the report for?

Mr HOWARD - Well, he was doing it for the Government. That was the issue. He was doing the report for the Government, so you would surely expect him to provide an uncompromised report to the Government?

Mr DEAN - There is evidence to show that is not right. We have been given and we may have to get more evidence. We have been told that is not right. It is nowhere near the cost of getting the track into a condition where it can have light rail on it.

Mr HOWARD - We are not talking about light rail. We are talking about a bit heavier rail than that. The proposal still includes a locomotive and carriages to bring 200 people to Scottsdale. That was part of the plan.

Mr DEAN - Is it not fact that is the long-term plan, the long-term position of heritage rail once they get up and going and so on and find themselves in a good position to do that? That is not their position now, is it?

Mr HOWARD - You cannot build light rail and then whack a heavy train on it though.

Mr DEAN - Sorry, you cannot?

Mr HOWARD - You cannot build a light railway and then put a heavy locomotive on it.

Mr DEAN - But could you continually build the condition of the track up over a period of time?

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Mr HOWARD - I think that would be a substantial risk that would probably never happen. Once again I refer you to the Yarra Valley Railway, which is taking \$8 million and 10 years to complete fewer than 13 kilometres and they have not finished it.

CHAIR - Do you have any further question that actually is relevant?

Mr DEAN - Yes, I do. That is relevant.

Mr FARRELL - To clarify a point about the Yarra Valley Railway. From evidence we have taken, they had a completely disused railway line that had no rail at all on it and they have had to rebuild embankments and put the rail down. It is a little different here where there is an existing railway line in place, and I do not think this has come through.

Much has been mentioned about the benefits of this rail trail to Lilydale and the area around there, but what will be the real benefits to Scottsdale and the ratepayers of the Dorset municipality?

Mr HOWARD - Most of the tourism development in the north-east has been centred around Derby and Bridport. Both those towns have experienced substantial increases in tourist numbers. Some of the benefit has flowed to Branhholm and Winnaleah, and a minor part of the benefit has flowed to Scottsdale because it is the town they sometimes drive through to get to either of those destinations.

We are really still a service centre, as opposed to a tourist destination, even though there is some reasonable product around here. We believe a steady flow of cyclists coming into the town, basically every day of the week, which will provide regular jobs, like permanent jobs, from eateries and accommodation places. It will also create the investment needed for any new product that needs to set up. We have things like a brewery and people are talking about setting up other sorts of things; there is interest in a distillery going in. The steady flow of tourists into the town will do it. It is not a silver bullet but the town does not need a silver bullet. We are no longer on our knees, we have recovered significantly, but it will give the little shot in the arm the town needs in terms of a tourism destination.

Mr DEAN - The Scottsdale-Billycock rail trail is brilliant. We have been up there today and we drove up a part of it; it is wonderful, there is no doubt about that.

Ms RATTRAY - We walked a small way, I wanted to add.

Mr DEAN - What evidence on the actual use of the track that shows numbers using that track are building up?

Mr HOWARD - You talked about 28 kilometres, but you said 26 kilometres, and I am not sure whichever those are correct. It depends on how far you go when you hit the top of Billycock.

Mr DEAN - Rotary told us it was 26.2.

Mr HOWARD - That is fine. In its current form, it is too short to be attractive to interstate and international visitors, because you can ride the whole thing in less than a day. As opposed to

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a true rail trail, which is a combination of a recreational trail and a tourism attraction, the trail between Scottsdale and Billycock at the moment is primarily a recreational trail for locals. A number of locals ride it on a regular basis and use it as a walking trail. We do not have numbers because we do not have track counters on it, because it was the first part of an overall expanded project to eventually take the rail trail back into Launceston. If you remember in the lead up to the 2016 federal election, Ross Hart promised \$1.8 million to co-locate a rail trail in the corridor from Coldwater Creek to Launceston.

At the moment it is primarily recreational trail, and a few visitors ride it; a few people certainly staying in the caravan park at the bottom of the hill down here use it as a walking trail - some of them have bikes and they go for short rides, but we have not put a track counter on it. We have track counters at Derby so we know how many people are there. We have not put a track counter on it because in our view it is only the first really small step in a larger project. In its current form, it will not attract interstate or international visitors.

Mr DEAN - We spoke to a rider on the track today who rides it regularly; he rides almost its entire length once a week and rides it from here to Tonganah every day. What you would say about his position - and he is a well-known person here in Scottsdale - that there are enough rail trails at the present time and we ought to look at something else to complement the rail trail you have? That is his position.

Mr HOWARD - Well, there are not any rail trails, other than the 26 kilometres; there are no other rail trails in Tasmania other than the 26 kilometres.

Mr DEAN - He is talking about this rail trail in this area. He is saying there should be some other activity here to complement the rail trail. He mentioned the heritage train, but he did say in fairness, 'I'm not sure if it would be viable or not.' That was his comment. He was saying there are enough here now and it has to be maintained properly, and he would like to see something else to complement this.

Mr HOWARD - That is fine. He is probably not aware of the fact for rail trails to be effective there needs to be that multi-day ride, multi-night stay. While it suits him to ride to Tonganah or wherever he goes - to go to the top of Billycock - he does that for recreation and for fitness, I would imagine.

That is not the sole intention of a rail trail. If you are going to spend the money, you might as well get the added bonus of gathering tourists up as well.

CHAIR - You are talking about tourists as opposed to locals using it?

Mr HOWARD - We still want locals to use it and we have a number of landowners back towards Lilydale who are waiting for the rail trail to be built. Not because they want to ride the whole length, but they want to use short sections near their property to ride in safety with their kids so they don't have to go out on the road.

At the moment it is a recreational trail. The long-term view is that it is the first part of a recreational/tourism trail.

CHAIR - Do you have any more pressing questions while we have Mr Howard here?

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Mr DEAN - Another statement you made was that there is interest from landowners along the line. I take it you mean from right through the whole length of the line?

Mr HOWARD - We had a bit of interest from a couple of landowners who own land at Lebrina. They have been primarily the one and one landowner in Nabowla, who indicated they have a house in Nabowla that they would be interested in converting into an Airbnb or some sort of accommodation.

Mr DEAN - I was thinking of the statement you made a while ago about Lebrina - about people not wanting to stop there because there is nothing there.

Mr HOWARD - Yes. Lebrina will never be big enough to be the primary start point as Tania suggested, but it needs more product because it is about a half a day ride from Lilydale. You are going to arrive at Lilydale around lunchtime and you need eateries and somewhere to grab a bite and stuff like that. That is the intention of these two landowners who actually own land right on the line.

Mr DEAN - Are you able to share with the committee the names of those landowners?

Mr HOWARD - Not without their permission.

Mr DEAN - I was only asking the question. That was in relation to bed and breakfast?

Mr HOWARD - No, one was in relation to an eatery.

Mr DEAN - And one was a potential bed and breakfast?

CHAIR - No other questions. We thank you very much for the time, for coming in and allowing the committee to ask you some questions and providing some extra information with regard to your submission. Thank you, Mr Howard.

Mr HOWARD - Not a problem. It was a pleasure. Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.