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Subject: CM: Government Business Governance Reform - personal submission

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To whom it may concern.

I write to offer a personal viewpoint in regard to Government Business Governance Reforms considerations.

I do so from the viewpoint of a long-standing and wide-ranging interest in transport including the interfaces between modes as well as the interrelationship with land use.

I can claim neither professional nor formal academic expertise to inform my comments.

I wish only to address the potential integration of TasPorts, TT Line and TasRail as has been recently foreshadowed. If implemented it should create more seamless integration in the existing freight and passenger spaces.

I see this potential integration as an opportunity to expand and enhance the passenger offering.

The new integrated business (for the purposes of this submission I'll call it TasTrans) should incorporate the necessary governance to allow for the modern passenger rail mode to be reintroduced (in the medium/long term) to significant sections of the state rail network.

From the earliest days of TasTrans, the business should be required to actively incorporate considerations about planning, infrastructure, operations and investment pertinent to the modern passenger rail mode into TasTrans's broader decision making.

Please note: I am not referring to the heritage/tourist rail sector eg. WCWR ownership, support for other mainly volunteer-run heritage rail operations eg. TTMS, DVR, DRR, RCR etc.

It's worth reviewing historical aspects as an aid to understanding current circumstances. The current version of TasRail (Tasmanian Railway Pty Ltd) was formed in late 2009 almost as a crisis management approach to rescuing freight rail operations from imminent collapse after approx 12 years privately run. It followed approximately 3 years after the rail network (tracks and associated infrastructure) was returned to State responsibility, managed as the name suggests by the Rail Management Unit (RMU) under the umbrella of the Department of Infrastructure Energy & Resources (DIER). DIER was subsequently incorporated into the Department of State Growth, although the RMU functions had long since been incorporated into the new TasRail.

The Tasmanian Railway Pty Ltd was tasked with network management and freight rail operations. To the best of my knowledge, there was no requirement for TasRail to include planning and investment considerations for potential future modern passenger rail operations.

After more than a hundred years of regular passenger services on the network, commencing with the initial Launceston-Deloraine section opened early 1871 followed soon after with the much longer connection to Hobart, such services were phased out in 1978 during the early years of the federal government's Australian National Railways' ownership of network and operations. Intermittent heritage/tourist excursions continued to access the network for a further quarter of a century (approx) until banned by the 3rd and final version of private ownership during the 1997-2009 era.

Over a number of years leading to the 1978 curtailment of regular passenger rail services, there was an ongoing decline in the number and reach of services, a pattern also occurring in many other parts of Australia and the World especially in less populous 'regional' areas. However, much more recently in areas elsewhere there have been many examples of a resurgence in service offerings including the reintroduction of passenger services on rail routes that had long been defunct.

In the UK alone there are several examples

of reintroduced services since the turn of the century either already in operation or in various stages of advancement towards that end. Just one example to mention is the restoration of full daily services from late 2021 on the Dartmoor Line after almost half a century. This passenger rail service links Okehampton (a New Norfolk scale settlement) to the regional hub of Exeter (a city between Launceston & Hobart in scale) over a rail distance very similar to that between Hobart and New Norfolk. Also of current interest to me, and comparable and relevant to Tasmania, is the Mid Cornwall Metro project, which is designed to provide a significant upgrade on existing passenger rail services (and associated intermodal links) that interconnect the major Cornwall settlements, which are all of a scale significantly smaller than Launceston, closer in scale to Tasmania's most major north-west coast settlements.

This resurrection is being accompanied and aided by ongoing evolution in the style of rail operations, infrastructure and vehicles and supported by investment granted by decision-makers who have continued to (or returned to) appreciate the value of the modern passenger rail mode which offers travellers a largely well respected, safe and predictable journey alternative.

However, the restoration of that appreciation does not appear to have occurred in this State within official decision-making circles, although that appreciation is surprisingly quite widespread in the wider Tasmanian community.

Tasmanians and our many guests continue to be denied the choice of this travel mode. Even worse, under current decision making structures there's no indication that this option is even being considered.

As I see it, responsibility for this mode seems to have long since disappeared into a decision-making & planning 'black hole'.

Three relatively concurrent projects demonstrate this clearly: the New Bridgewater Bridge project (and planned deconstruction of existing rail/road bridge); the various plans over time for the former Hobart Railyards (now Macquarie Point precinct); the reactivation of Hobart's out-of-service western shore rail corridor (now designated transit corridor). All three are sagas with a much longer history than might appear in a superficial look at more contemporary developments in each case.

I'm highly interested in and very supportive of the overall thrust of all three projects. I've followed each saga as closely as possible (for a private individual) over many years, and engaged to a significant degree with opportunities to provide feedback in all three cases.

Of course, I'm completely opposed to the aspects of each project which will impact the rail mode so negatively. These actions balkanise Hobart's out-of-service rail corridor, disconnect the rail route from the wider state network (at Bridgewater) remove access from near the Hobart CBD and otherwise make extremely difficult future use of significant sections of the route for rail (passenger) operations.

These actions and others send a very strong message about how little our current (and recent past) decision-makers value the modern passenger rail mode, and how much is being done to minimise the possibility of the mode being reintroduced to Tasmania in future.

It's inspiring to read about the effort that the Ukrainians are making to keep their passenger and freight rail systems operable, often in the most dire circumstances created by outside 'interference'.

In Tasmania we need no outside interference to keep modern passenger rail services out of action. One might say that it is 'friendly fire' in the form of locally made decisions and actions that is creating that outcome.

2025 will be a year for the world of transport to reflect on 200 years of passenger rail services, to celebrate past and contemporary success while continuing the ongoing developments to ensure future success.

Tasmania's mindset is still stuck in the 1970s if current circumstances continue, hence my recommendation for reform within the government business space.

Ian Addison
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