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Dear Jill

We are writing to make a joint submission to the Government Administration Committee B Inquiry into Integrated Transport Options for Southern Tasmania. We understand that this submission is late but we ask that the Committee please accept it as it covers new material.

We make the case that the Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources (DIER) is not sufficiently alert to modern, integrated and strategic planning for transport in Tasmania. It is our contention that:

1. DIER's focus on road infrastructure projects in its submissions for Federal infrastructure and transport funds has demonstrated a lack of strategic thinking. Its approach has missed opportunities for funding public transport, in particular the Northern Suburbs Light Rail Project
2. DIER is missing the tram - there is great enthusiasm in cities around Australia for light rail. Last week the A.C.T. Chief Minister announced policy for light rail in Canberra.

DIER's submissions to Infrastructure Australia – road focused, miss public transport opportunities

DIER has submitted a number of proposals to Infrastructure Australia (IA) in 2010, 2011 and 2012. This process requires States and Territories to submit projects over \$100million and then IA assesses all submissions and provides recommendations to the Federal Infrastructure Minister and Department. Many of the successful projects and highly recommended projects nationally have been public transport or integrated transport projects.

In 2011 DIER submitted a proposal for \$1,662 million for a Hobart to Launceston Road Strategy – a grab bag of road infrastructure, spread from the north to the south of the state. **This included \$238 million for Brooker Highway upgrades.** The 2011 submission also included an *“Application for eligibility for Assessment – Passenger Transport in Hobart's Northern Suburbs”*, but did not request funding for the Northern Suburbs Rail.

Unsurprisingly DIER's submissions for road upgrades have not yet received the support of the IA experts – this is because the proposals do not have the integrated planning and strategic thinking behind them to warrant a favourable recommendation. These road upgrades are expensive, unstrategic proposals that do not meet the IA's threshold that the *projects “will improve productivity and benefits will exceed the financial cost.”*

[Progress and Action: June 2012 Report to the Council of Australian Governments \(p95\)](#)

IA is most likely to recommend funding for projects that operate using the principles of regional infrastructure planning, including:

- *“regional plans should be integrated across relevant functions and all agencies whose decision-making and investment decisions impact on a region, and*
- *regional plans should outline a long-term vision for the development of the region including:*
 - (a) A set of economic, social and environmental objectives*
 - (b) Evidence based analysis of the region’s profile, challenges and opportunities”*

[Progress and Action: June 2012 Report to the Council of Australian Governments](#)(page 94)

While DIER’s road proposals included agreements with relevant local councils, they do not appear to have involved the broad number of planning, social and environmental agencies and organisations needed to make clever, forward thinking and strategic decisions.

Tasmania risks being left worse off and vulnerable by DIER’s continued outmoded car-centric mindset. The car-centric mindset is being abandoned in jurisdictions around the world, necessitated by the inevitability of rising oil prices and by the undesirability of continued private vehicle use in the face of climate change. Tasmania will be in a far stronger position and its infrastructure future-proofed if DIER is able to demonstrate a more progressive, joined up and passenger transport focused approach.

Missed opportunity to secure funding for public transport

We believe that DIER’s focus on road submissions is a mistake. IA would have looked more favourably at a more financially modest submission that presented the northern suburbs railway in a long-term, strategic planning framework. It would have been better for DIER to work with councils to present a well considered proposal for the Northern Suburbs Railway which should include:

- Acknowledgement of the aging population and high rates of disability along the corridor
- The opportunity along the rail corridor to develop new medium density housing stock, more suited to the trend towards smaller families and an aging population
- Acknowledgement of peak oil and the vulnerability of a low-income community to the rising costs of car dependence
- An agreement with the Councils along the corridor to implement land-use planning and parking cost reforms at the local level to support the long-term modal shift in Hobart from cars to public transport
- The modest \$100 million cost of the Northern Suburbs Rail compared with the \$238m Brooker Highway upgrade.

These strategic elements, not least the relatively low price tag of the Northern Suburbs Railway, would make this project very appealing for federal funding. It would also deliver a strategic, forward thinking transport solution that has high community support to the people of Hobart and best services the capital’s northwards expansion for the next century.

Recommendations

Our strong recommendations are that this Inquiry:

- Request that DIER submit all documents received from IA that provide comments and feedback on DIER’s submissions, particularly on its road project submissions,

- Seek advice from IA about its view on past and current Tasmania's road submissions, as well as upcoming opportunities for State government submissions. Also seek advice on whether other states have a larger proportion of their projects devoted to passenger transport than DIER currently does.
- Request that DIER make its 2012 submission to IA public, as the governments of Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and the ACT have already done.
- Recommend that DIER work quickly with other departments, Councils and the community to prepare a proposal for the 2014-15 round of IA funding, which opens in April 2013 (and closes in August 2013). We understand that this round will have a stronger focus on connecting people and public transport and therefore a well-considered submission for the Northern Suburbs Railway will be viewed favourably.
- Recommend that all future federal transport and infrastructure submissions include Environment and Human Services Departments, as well as community consultation in the early planning and development of submissions. This will help ensure DIER's submissions better reflect a broad range of strategic urban planning considerations.

The final recommendation needs to be addressed urgently as there is a separate round of funding occurring now under the **Nation Building 2** program. This focus of Tasmania's next submission should be making funds available for roads, active transport (cycling and pedestrian infrastructure) and public transport.

We would value to opportunity to speak to this submission. Please contact us via Anna Reynolds on anna.reynolds@tas.greens.org.au or 0423 222 149.

Yours sincerely,



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