

The Heritage Rail Gazette

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BEHOLD KING SOLOMON!

Peter Gutwein, Treasurer of Tasmania, also Minister for Forestry and Minister for Planning and Local Government, has handed down his decision on the future of the North East railway corridor. Opting for a compromise solution, it offers less than satisfactory outcomes to either party.

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King Solomon is that story where two women quarrelled over a baby, each claiming the child was hers. The king drew his sword and proposed to cut the baby in half, so as to satisfy both mothers, but more about that later...

Upon reviewing Treasury's report on the future of the North East Railway Corridor, one must wonder, did you read said document at all, Mr Gutwein? If you did, then you clearly have failed to comprehend its contents and subsequently made a fallacious decision.

Careful examination of the report reveals a plethora of obfuscations, fuzzy words and vague assumptions. In the section supposed to analyse the rail trail's merits, for instance, we find a revised proposal that goes from Scottsdale only as far West as Lilydale Falls.

The original proposal for the Commonwealth grant funding was to reach Coldwater Creek, a 33% truncation of the distance for the same grant money, how is that supposed to work?

There is no plan or commitment from anyone to fulfil the original scope of the grant, which was to complete the trail to Coldwater Creek, as originally intended, let alone all the way to Launceston, preferring to leave that up to LCC to deal with. Furthermore, the unspecified cost of the link to Lilydale village is not even included in the cost estimates.

In essence, what we would end up with is a bike trail from Nowhere to Nowhere; a rail trail that will rely on unquantified volunteer labour and, to quote the paper: "It is estimated that ongoing maintenance costs, including two weed-control sprays per year, will total around \$25 000 per year."

Other tasty quotes include "Dorset Council has provided updated project cost estimates that have been provided to the Treasurer on a confidential basis." and "...half the costs, up to a total of \$2.94 million, will be borne by the Australian Government." Please feel free to actually read the entire report for full context.

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Put two and two together and you see that Dorset Council seem to care only about a bag of money teasing and tantalisingly close and yet so far! They will stop at nothing to get their way. Shame, too, on Treasury for failing to pick up on this.

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Moving on down the pages, the "second proposal" is played down as being amateur, fuddy duddy and not to be taken seriously. Conflicting reports that

compare apples with oranges make it look like a pipe dream that will cost too much and will never work. Every possible obstacle is put in the way of success.

The reality by any measure is, the L&NER heritage railway proposal is far superior and a visionary concept. It has public support, an active volunteer base and its own funds. We are 'mend-and-make-do' kind of people and we have common sense. The benefits it will bring to the region and the State cannot all be measured in dollars and statistics, but in happiness, wellbeing and community spirit.

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Your decision to graciously give to the railway proponents what is essentially the bit of the corridor that Dorset didn't want any more is abominable and insulting. It will be a railway from Nowhere to Nowhere, whose continued existence is contingent on measureable success and impossible targets. Its potential, however, is handicapped from the start and the venture apparently set up to fail.

Meanwhile, you conveniently get away looking innocent of any wrongdoing and the community gets lumped with two half babies, which brings us back to the beginning. What good is half a baby each? In the story, the real mother gave up her child, exposing her opponent as an impostor.

Do you know what the king did next?