

Transport For The Clever Country

Ms Susan Templeman

Ms Louise Markus

Ms Carmel McCallum

august 4, 2010

Dear Candidates for Macquarie

I write to ask each of you to make regional transport an immediate priority issue in the forthcoming federal election, as the first step towards achieving a genuine national transport infrastructure suitable for a developed nation in the 21st century.

Public transport facilities for people in Macquarie are lamentable. Train services are infrequent with no fast trains to the metro area. Much as I would prefer to go to Sydney by train for business trips, the cost and time involved preclude this; and even if I arrived by train it's simply not possible to use metro transport to travel between meetings and clients in Sydney. Apart from daily commuters, this electorate contains a high number of people in home-based businesses who must still regularly service clients in Sydney. Much of this can be done with modern technology but there is still a need to make personal visits; and such is the time taken in travelling to, within and from Sydney that it's virtually impossible via public transport. I recently visited clients in Mascot, Randwick, Harbord, Carlingford and Chatswood and needed to return to the mountains on the same day. I estimate that using rail/bus-based transport and leaving at 6.00 am on day 1, this would have taken almost two full days of time. Even the overstretched London Underground rail system, established over a century ago, easily facilitates rapid point-to-point travel like this, because it operates as a grid rather than a central hub system.

It's truly astonishing that an electorate like Macquarie, much of which is geographically an outlying area of Sydney (and classed as such, incidentally, by Tourism NSW) nevertheless relies on facilities more typical of remote rural areas. Whereas in Zurich, in Switzerland, residents in dormitory areas up to 85 kms away (comparable to the distances mountains residents travel to central Sydney) have the use of light rail services which operate every half hour throughout the day, take about an hour and cost significantly less than the equivalent distance fare here.

In many other areas of Europe (most notably in France) and in Japan, fast TGV-type rail travel has been the norm for at least half a century. Why, when transport is *so* vital in what we like to call the 'clever country', do we still rely so *completely* on roads for both freight and passenger movement? The reason, not to mince words, is that Australian rail and public transport generally operate at third world standard, or worse, because our leaders do not lead. Effective rail infrastructure would very largely remedy this; but the silence from politicians on all sides is deafening, even during a national election campaign (which is sadly canvassing no major strategic issues at all). Workable rail options are especially important for Macquarie residents because of the reliance on road transport for freight to and from the interior, which travels on the only route available to it (through small village communities – an unheard of notion in Europe) on roads which are either completely substandard or selectively widened so as to destroy the regional character.

I therefore ask each of you to address this problem by publicly committing to a proper program of modern rail infrastructure development, for this region and for the nation. This, in fact, is a pressing imperative given the likelihood that petroleum costs may become economically prohibitive for the freight haulage industry in the foreseeable future. With so little to choose between the main parties and their leaders, and the usual auction packages well under way, it is the transport issue that will wholly determine my vote. Thank you for considering these matters.

Yours etc...