



Cooma and Monaro Progress Association ABN 22 717 375 506

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*Cooma and Monaro Progress Association works to promote the economic
development and social wellbeing of the region*

2 October 2024

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Dear Dr Schott,

Cooma and Monaro Progress Association (CMPA) cordially provides herewith a **print of each of the eight documents** substantiating CMPA's electronic Freight Policy submission of 30 May 2024; facilitating reference to the printed mode.

CMPA also provides, following, a **preliminary response** after a first reading of the Panel's Interim Directions Paper.

CMPA regrets the necessity to exceed the page limit of submissions in the circumstances: the documents are, by coincidence, on-topic of the Consultations, yet are a six-year initiative by seven specialists. The Policy Reform and the initiative have the same aim: to improve the transport of freight.

The initiative met with resistance beginning in 2019, without reason to deviate from the initiative. Where the initiative deviates from existing policy, that seems not to rule it out of being a reform. It would be remiss of CMPA not to submit this once-in-twenty-years opportunity.

The submission implies reconsideration of the policy that NSW container exports should preferably go through Port Botany. If not on this occasion, reform of the policy might never be considered. A permanent organisation may easily be too busy to seriously consider a radical initiative. For instance: CMPA's Review of the C2E Feasibility Study Report, March 2021: **'6. Freight Catchment Area:** Beginning in mid-2019, CMPA were repeatedly informed: "For freight from the inland, the railway does not fit in with existing plans of Transport for NSW and of their country rail agent (John Holland Rail)."

'However, the decision to undertake the Feasibility Study can naturally result in fresh options for that freight. The new railway and the Port of Eden can cooperate in competing successfully with the alternative more congested ports and their approaches.'

Executive Committee:

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Since the pandemic, cruise ship visits to Eden have resumed and the number of visits scheduled for 30 October 2024 to 18 May 2025 is 25.

On 25 March 2024, the CEO of Snowy Hydro Limited commended CMPA on its vision of C2E for the region and wished CMPA well in the initiative.

Federal potential

Comparing rail with road: on the eastern seaboard from Melbourne to Brisbane, the national highway programme has now matured. Dual carriageways connect almost the whole length via the Yass-Canberra-Goulburn triangle and Sydney. (The Coffs Harbour bypass remains under construction and some of the Canberra to Yass highway duplication is incomplete.) This programme needed Federal determination from the 1970s. Having successfully concentrated on highways, the Federal Government could now increase concentration on railways. Month by month the national imperative to reduce emissions is gaining acceptance. Line by line, new and improved railways will reduce emissions. State and territory borders are a challenge, but that can be overcome, especially with Federal involvement. They succeeded with the Albury-Wodonga highway bypass in recent years. Five governments needed to accept: two local, two state, and the Commonwealth.

Australia should surely be connected well with the national capital. It was the Federal Government that decided in 1908 to put the capital at Canberra. Given that they now have the prominent financial capacity, and they have provided Canberra airport, and have accepted responsibility for the national highway connections, they could at this time decide to contribute further to rail connections. From Sydney is a high priority. Air passengers can be diverted by improved train speeds that are still less than for high speed trains. From Melbourne is also a priority. Commonwealth Railways, supported by NSW Government Railways, completed the design for the missing link from Melbourne, that is Canberra to Yass (C2Y), in 1969. Australia's population has since doubled, and Canberra's has grown threefold. The design was web-published by National Archives in 2023. It can easily be adapted to yield the same standard as for Inland Rail. It would cater for tilting passenger trains at speeds of up to 160 km/hr and freight trains at up to 115 km/hr. C2Y complements C2E in providing much improved access from the inland for exports. A national railway network would include Inland Rail to Eden via Canberra. (In the past, when classified as a Road of National Importance, for instance to a port, the road though not a state highway would attract national funding. Comparably, Railways of National Importance could be eligible for Federal funding.)

CMPA has discussed with the ACT Government their readiness for connection of C2E with C2Y. This connection is recommended to be further discussed and also with the Commonwealth, facilitating uninterrupted freight from the inland to Eden. Upon high speed rail following in time, for instance via Gunning, the first C2Y will not be wasted: both lines will confer resilience on the network.

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Yours faithfully,
for **Cooma and Monaro Progress Association** www.coomansw.com.au

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