

## The Honourable Chris Minns

Premier of New South Wales  
Level 33 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

January 30 2024

Dear Mr Minns

I am writing to you to provide information about our ongoing campaign to bring long lost passenger train services into Cessnock via Kurri Kurri.

Although this is currently included in the draft strategic transport plan for the Hunter (2021-41), the rapid population growth and lack of any effective public transport in the area, requires that this project be moved out of 'distant strategy' mode into current term action mode.

The Cessnock electorate has become almost exclusively reliant on private vehicles for transport to get in and out of the city and surrounds; by necessity rather than choice. This is causing significant traffic problems and does not help us move into a carbon neutral position. Plus, it leaves a large segment of the population isolated.

Being an electorate with above average levels of disadvantage many people are effectively stranded, because they don't have multiple cars in the household, don't or can't drive; from youth to elders.

Since the 2023 NSW elections we have been exploring what is required to get trains running again and establishing reliable costing estimates on the work required.

What has been uncovered in the process is the need to act quickly in order to save taxpayers 100s of millions in project costs, which will occur if the initiative is left in the strategic plan for attention in the next 10 years or more.

By 2041 the population is predicted to make 112,000 a 58% increase on the current number. It is essential that this infrastructure is in place to be in front of this growth, to attract people and investment into the area. The reasonable catchment for the proposed station locations is approximately 50,000 people; which equates to between \$2000 - \$4000 per person to get a service running. As you would be aware, this is a very low cost compared to other rail infrastructure investments made in and around Sydney.

The included report prepared by a local rail industry consultant is deeply researched and has been validated by a team at a major local infrastructure engineering organisation; who themselves have expert knowledge of the corridor and what is required to upgrade to passenger train standards.

This case report has been presented to both Jenny Aitchison and Clayton Barr for their attention; along with a copy to Dan Repacholi as a courtesy.

The main point being, that this should be done and needs to be done sooner than planned, to get the services available at a much more affordable cost to the state and prior to the population explosion.

There is a petition due to be tabled by Clayton Barr after February 9 2024, requesting state acquisition of the corridor and the introduction of passenger trains; along with steps to build new rollingstock for the future. This is the first stage of a growing community action process.

Current line owners, Aurizon / South Maitland Railway and Yancoal have expressed interest in state acquisition for this use. We are confident if Transport for NSW comes in with a plan that enhances Aurizon's commercial operations at East Greta Junction, the acquisition will be an affordable and speedy transition of ownership to the state.

Catherine King's office and Dan Repacholi have indicated federal support maybe available, once the state government commits to the initiative. Dan has expressed strong support for this initiative.

Conversations had on the street and online are showing great support for this, with the main negative comments not about the trains; but the lack of faith that any government will ever make the investment in such a safe seat or that money only gets spent in Sydney; so, this is a wasted effort.

After 107 years' worth of Labor representatives elected, the electorate could certainly do with some morale boosting recognition, like public transport; something most populations this size around the state take for granted.

As you will see, this is the most affordable rail infrastructure project available in Australia, it will have a huge impact on the community and be a legacy for the ALP to lean into over both upcoming federal and state elections. Please get behind this proposal and help us accelerate the implementation process.

You and your office are welcome to contact me to answer any questions that arise and our team would love to sit down with you and discuss. Please respond via return mail.

Regards

Name:

Address:

Email:

[www.traintocessnock.org](http://www.traintocessnock.org)