



THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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Brush Cherry Edition
April 2009
81 Cullen Street
Nimbin 2480
phone: 6689-1148
email: nimbin.
goodtimes@gmail.com

Parliament, mayors demand release of elusive 'transport report'

Pressure is mounting on the NSW Government to release a report from an inter-state task force set up to canvass options for developing new public transport links between the Northern Rivers and South-east Queensland.

First announced in June 2006, the Cross-border Transport Taskforce was scheduled to present a final report to state cabinet by mid 2007, but as yet no such reports or information about the key details they might contain has been made public.

On 12th March 2009, efforts by both Nationals and Greens MPs in the state upper house resulted in the passing of a resolution ordering the release of any reports by the task-force and all related documents. In a crushing defeat for the government, all non-Labor members joined together to support the motion, including the government's usual allies from the Shooters Party and Christian Democrats.

Yet at the expiry of the 14-day deadline for the release of the documents, the report had still not been released. Transport Minister David Campbell told NGT on

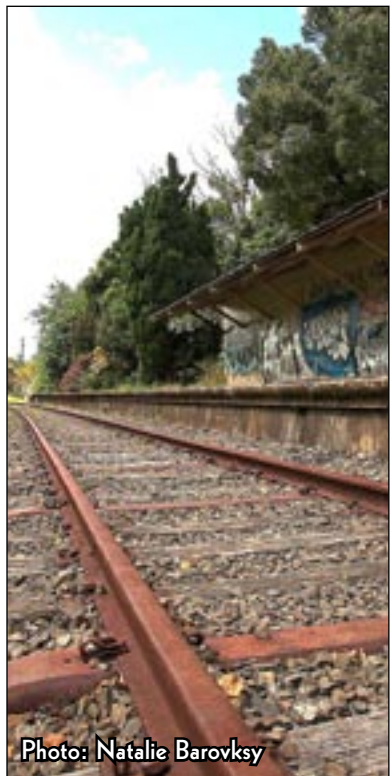


Photo: Natalie Barovksy

30th March, "I am advised that the Ministry of Transport is liaising with Queensland Transport to finalise the report before it is submitted to me.

"After Government has considered the report I will release it to the public," Mr Campbell said.

Trains on our Tracks (TOOT) president Karin Kolbe said, "For too long this report has been cited by state and federal politicians as the reason why no further discussions or planning could proceed. We need to see this report to start progressing plans to revitalise this essential public transport infrastructure for the north coast. The population in northern NSW and southern Qld is increasing and clearly, essential transport links need to be planned now."

Nationals Member for Lismore, Thomas George, said that "rather than stimulate the local economy by promoting the reinstatement of the service, the State Labor Government has hidden its report into the project from public scrutiny."

Greens MP Lee Rhiannon is calling on Premier Nathan Rees to immediately release the draft report. "Failing to release any response more than two and a half years since the taskforce was initiated shows contempt for the public and their transport needs" she said, and added that the government's response was "sneaky and plays the North Coast community for fools."

Smoke and mirrors from minister's office

Mayors from the Northern Region Organisation of Councils (NOROC), led by Lismore mayor Jenny Dowell, joined the demands for the release of the cross-border reports, and also called for the release of all other relevant documents relating to the Casino-Murwillumbah line.

Federal Member for Page Janelle Saffin told the NOROC meeting that she is quietly confident of securing Federal support for the development of a two-region integrated transport plan, so that Northern Rivers also can access funds identified for nation-building projects.

"I am seeking the support of the New South Wales and Queensland governments, NOROC's member councils and the South East Queensland Council of Mayors to contribute financially to a plan that identifies

transport needs on both sides of the border for now and the next half a century, Ms Saffin said.

"Petitions and inquiries have not succeeded in bringing back the trains. We need a different approach. Working together we have the power to make a difference."

The NOROC Mayors also resolved to call upon the State Government to include the Casino-Murwillumbah line on the priority list of projects it has submitted to Federal infrastructure body Infrastructure Australia for possible federal funding.

Minister Campbell responded to the news by stating, "The NSW Government made its submissions to Infrastructure Australia last year as required. This list was drawn up after careful consideration. Those submissions are now being considered."

The obfuscation continues...

Benny Zable's Mission to Israel

Nimbin's famous muralist Benny Zable flies out of Australia on April 8th to attend an Insight Meditation retreat in Tel Aviv, Israel, with Christopher Titmuss.

Following the retreat he plans to paint a mural, *One love, Palesrael*, on the separation wall between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

The S in 'Palesrael' has the words 'share together share' as an inscription.

This design is inspired by Christopher's article, *A One State Solution*, in which he says, "There are Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and Muslims working hard to find reconciliation. They are the true sons and daughters of both communities.

"The ultimate resolution is surely a one state solution, providing far greater security through democracy for both communities. Parliamentary seats could be through proportional representation with a 5% minimum vote to ensure extremist minorities



had to work very hard to deserve a place in Parliament in Jerusalem.

"It would require cross party support for a government to be elected. It would be a nation like England and Scotland in the United Kingdom. Everything is workable if the will is there.

"A creative Israeli and Palestinian culture and society would forge a single nation to secure peace, justice and security.

"Surely two small communities in the Middle East can resolve its love and attachment to the land.

"I have come up with a name for the single state. **Palesrael.**"

Benny says he will be away for three months, in which time he hopes to have lined up all the approvals, sponsors, scaffolding and volunteers needed to get the 20-metre long mural underway.



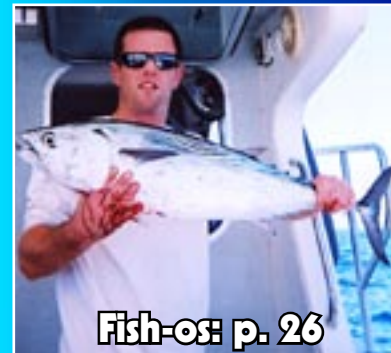
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