

NATIONAL SEA HIGHWAY

Submission

25th February 2014

I would like to clarify what a NSH link should cover.

A number of major organisations, some said to be now represented by a group independent of me, NSHC Tasmania, have given me personal written support for a full National Sea Highway covering all people, all vehicles and all freight – presumably not for bulk cargo normally transported in the hulls of ships around the coast.

Contrary to an impression that may be taken from some evidence before this Commission, this support importantly included the coverage of all southbound freight which would include consumables, building materials, furniture etc.

To my knowledge the width of this support to include full southbound freight has not been varied.

As with any highway, there can be no equitable NSH without this important coverage.

How can the NSH be equitable to mainland suppliers to a growing Tasmanian market without it? Also how can the NSH be equitable to the Tasmanian people and their businesses without the option of the benefits of fair trade from comprehensive southbound equalisation?

Major organisations interstate have supported the full linkage, including VECCI and ANRA presumably on this basis. See Peter Brohier's submission to the Coastal Shipping Inquiry.

The NSH and equalisation needs to have national application.

Also, it is important that the BSPVES be applied by Canberra to deliver full equalisation, including a number of other low fare options, and a necessary foot passenger fare. The Keating proposal covered many fare options.

The stated aim of the BSPVES was to encourage low passenger fares through competition. This includes a low foot passenger fare, as did a proposed \$50 Howard passenger fare in 2001.

The BSPVES, as originally intended, was not just to be an accompanied vehicle scheme. In the context of it being part of the National Highway, how could it be?

Without coverage of foot passengers, and therefore the option of leaving a car at home, the BSPVES would be highly inefficient and costly. In other words the necessary bus option should be available on a NSH

Air must be required to compete with full highway surface travel options as it does over every other interstate inter-capital route.

It is often the case that sea and air transport is seen as an adjunct to the accommodation sector,

In the case of the NSH, full highway equivalence would be seen as an adjunct to both Victoria and Tasmania and ultimately the national infrastructure.

It is important that the BSPVES funding, now near half a billion, is not just applied to value adding travel experiences and therefore adding to the cost of the crossing, including the quest for new and better ships (see the Hidding Hansard transcript) and better accommodation mainly based on cabin accommodation rather than the high volume movement of people.

This includes applying the BSPVES to move the shell of cars though an unintended way of providing a largely Commonwealth funded “free “car incentive, in preference to the use of federal funding **applied to provide many basic, high volume highway transport options to a very wide group of travellers, moving in both directions.**

The PC has a responsibility to examine the application of BSPVES funding – value added tourism **raising the cost of crossing** or volume NSH service?

The BSPVES is a very flexible scheme and can support and be used right now to provide many fare options – see the Rundle experiment.

It has been said by some that there is a lack of passenger and vehicle capacity.

This has resulted from under use of existing ferries, each capable of crossing Bass Strait twice every 24 hours, on the existing longer route.

A low, all year, consistently priced highway based fare could possibly have filled ferries in winter- the Rundle initiative **and Vic Tas and CTH calculations Coastal shipping inquiry submission**

Also an offer to relocate unused northern hemisphere ferries to Bass Strait over our summer period needs to be taken up - unless value adding travel experiences are to continue to mainly take the place of equalised high volume highway travel. See Hidding Hansard and **Coastal Shipping submission regarding the type of travellers needed and Cheek comments.**

By adopting this northern hemisphere option, the cost of providing for new vessels can be dramatically reduced. Also revenue would increase with consistent low total fares with or without a car, reducing the unnecessary focus of just moving vehicles and by using existing ferries twice a day. This approach will restore the passenger vehicle ratio to the level it was before the BSPVES was introduced and open access. **This will impact positively on population, investment and jobs as is the stated aim of the BSPVES. Its impact on freight volumes will also be considerable (over 50 % of southbound freight is to retail).**

There is no widespread business and community support for any transport option other than equalisation and certainly none for a “free” car with no downward pressure on total passenger and vehicle fares.

It should not be the role of the PC to segment different groups and suggest minor adjustments to the schemes- or even suggest minor variations in the operation of TT Line. **There is enough flexibility in its terms of reference to consider the big picture and enough funding to cost it. This responsibility should not be left to again fall on my largely unfunded committees.**

The PC should instead recommend substantial changes to both schemes consistent with the value of the nation’s natural and developed assets on both sides of Bass Strait. **Changes recommended by the PC are very immaterial when compared with the complete linking of Victoria and Tasmania.**

Maintaining the status quo has no mandate and skews benefits to limited stakeholders.

The flow on **impact of this approach** is also far too small when compared with the economic and social impact of extending the Hume Highway from Sydney to Hobart via Melbourne - and its needed right now.

The PC should engage its substantial resources to meet mandates and not limit its engagement to mainly maintain and improve the status quo within existing budgets.

If the PC doesn’t do the complete job of trying to deliver for Tasmania working proposals for the effective interstate movement of all “people and freight”, then which organisation in this nation will, or is ever capable of doing so?

Will it be again left to the Federal Government to do that job and perhaps yet another report can be added to the many that already line Bass Strait.

It’s 4am and after more than two decades I am tired of writing about this.

Peter Brohier