

MEDIA RELEASE

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BASS STRAIGHT – THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY

Earlier this month a meeting in Canberra where business communities on both sides of Bass Strait have called on the Australian Government to link our nation by a “National Sea Highway” between Victoria and Tasmania. To this end Transport groups, Manufacturing groups, Local Council representatives (Mayor of Devonport), TFGA and Robert Harrison of the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania met a number of key players which culminated in a meeting with Michael Sutton and Marcus James of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport on Thursday morning (7th February 2013). After a 2 hour discussion expressing our concerns of the lack of the National Sea Highway support from the Federal Government that a real understanding of our concerns became apparent Robert Harrison said.

Existing federal Bass Strait Equalisation Schemes are not delivering comprehensive equalisation or the equivalent of even the worst road in Australia. They are not facilitating fair trade or freedom of mobility for many Australians. Unlike other states, Tasmania is not adequately connected to the Nation’s Transport Grid, which for every other state is connected because of the federal funding of these highway and rail links.

Foot passengers, passengers in vehicles, many vehicles, and southbound consumables, including building materials, furniture. Currently international exports from Tasmania are not covered by the existing equalisation schemes.

The idea of a National Sea Highway goes back to federation where in 1901 the colonies federated to achieve an Integrated National Economy. So in effect we are seeking full integration of the Tasmanian economy into the national economy with an effective federal sea-based transport corridor crossing Bass Strait. How would Victoria / NSW link their economies if there were no bridges crossing the Murray River?

Since federation the Commonwealth has connected all other states fairly with road and rail links costing billions. It has delivered transport equality between other states and should now do so between Victoria and Tasmania.

We suggested using shipping, Canberra can easily bring the cost of the movement of all people, all vehicles, and all freight, save for bulk cargo, to the cost of road travel thereby creating an effective “National Sea Highway”.

This proposal will offer transport equity to the people and businesses of our nation, makes sound financial sense and will directly and immediately drive many industries in southeastern Australia. It will allow all fair access to our island state.

In summary we are asking for equalization support for example of a fare that equates to

all travel on the Hume Highway from Sydney to Melbourne by truck, car, bus, or rail with or without a trailer / camper etc and for the same cost structure for the kilometers travelled.

Robert Harrison said, “the benefit to all our fellow members if we can succeed in getting say \$60 fares for passengers and say \$300 fares for cars, and \$350 to \$400 for cars and caravans etc one way would boost our real estate market considerable let alone the commercial and rural markets as well if freight transfers are equalized for all goods coming into and out of the state whether for domestic or export markets”.

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