

gpoint

Equity must

The way ahead for Bass Strait freight equalisation under an Abbott Government can be positive, but the state can act now, writes long-term freight lobbyist Peter Brohier

THE Federal Government is expected to engage the Productivity Commission and the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission in a review of Bass Strait equalisation schemes on the grounds of equity and efficiency.

For equity and its economy, Tasmania deserves the same surface and air links as other states.

A review will presumably allow consideration of restraints on the movement of people, vehicles and freight, facilitating the movement of people, with a vehicle or without, and being able to travel for any purpose is critical.

Bass Strait shipping should be seen as adjunct to, and be comparable with, the national highways it connects.

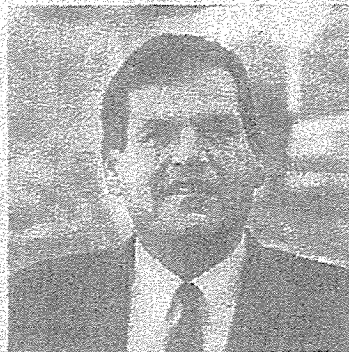
While part of the accommodation sector seems adequately catered for, the singular focus of federal support for accompanied vehicles for driving holidays for mainlanders, holiday packages or travel experiences needs to change.

The accommodation sector plays an important role and can measure its impact on the economy.

What cannot be measured as precisely is the opening of a comprehensive highway-based transport link connecting Hobart and Melbourne.

It is reasonably believed by many the drawing potential of such a link can be substantial.

Many service industries are larger than the accommodation sector. Such industries need all-year highway fare equivalence to guarantee them access to greater numbers of customers.



Peter Brohier

Together, these service industries have a far greater chance of growing the Tasmanian economy.

Redirection of federal funding, while maintaining equalisation, will treat all industries equally.

It will also provide the opportunity for retaining residents by increasing the amenity of living in Tasmania through low-cost, consistently priced access to the rest of Australia.

With this support, sufficient critical mass may be achieved for many industries and activities.

Overheads of businesses can be spread over more customers and offer the possibility of lower prices for goods and services.

A competitive air and sea access policy should also be of advantage.

The Federal Coalition says it intends to also review the freight equalisation scheme. All sea freight needs to be covered. Southbound coverage of consumables will allow the benefits of fair competition. Lower prices can be expected.



As part of an equitable surface link or national sea highway, international exports will then be able to be carried at highway equivalent costs.

Any ships bringing consumables direct to Tasmania from Asia should also need to compete with consumables from the mainland, to be fair to mainland suppliers.

The impact of an equitable link can be immediate. There is large

ny is devastated
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is not aware that
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Danny about it.
MIM MARTAIN

talkingpoint

bridge the Strait



A comprehensive sea link can make Tasmania rich with natural and developed strengths, far more productive and turn an existing sea barrier into a highway

promised Tasmania that Bass Strait would be part of the national highway and accepted that "the federal government has a special responsibility to achieve equality for Tasmanians in developing opportunities for their state".

Consistent with this undertaking, an Abbott Government should continue to fund two major equalisation schemes and to review them.

With an approaching state election, it should be remembered the impact of one of the federal equalisation schemes can be easily redirected by the Tasmanian Government through its TT Line.

This move could go along way to deliver transport equality for passengers and vehicles.

It would be a pity if the Tasmanian Government chose not to take more advantage of this valuable asset, obtained largely as a result of a public campaign for Bass Strait transport equality.

WAY FLOW: A review will open up opportunities for all sectors.

Picture: DERRICK DEN HOLLANDER

Shipping capacity available, under-used ports and good and relatively untapped equalisation funding. Efficient drivers of wealth can take advantage of a fully equalised highway. A comprehensive sea link can make Tasmania rich with natural and developed strengths, far more

productive and turn an existing sea barrier into a highway.

Efficiencies can result – shorter and quicker crossings, higher passenger vehicle ratios with more passengers per vehicle, better use of public and private investment, greater freight movements and better integration of Victorian and Tasmanian economies.

This review can be about getting the corridor and the economy of Tasmania working better. It would be hard for any ACOG or Productivity Commission review to find against fair interstate linkages and the need for competition policies as enjoyed by other states.

What should not be forgotten is that the Howard Government

T SPOTS

FLAKE

ing well with lures.

ers will catch good number of fish drift spinning. As we be prepared for all

Flies flit, but trout lie

timeout | talkingpoint

Real time

Odd

NEW YORK: Patients of a New York City hospital are getting billed for tens of millions of dollars because of a computer error. Unemployed doorman Alexis Rodriguez says he almost became ill when he received a \$US44.8 million (\$A43.7 million) bill from the Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center. He was hospitalised last year with pneumonia and was afraid the bill was legitimate. It turns out the company that prepares the bills had mistakenly put the invoice number in the space where the invoice amount should go. — AP

DVD

Win Win

Any "dramedy" with Paul Giamatti is going to be worth some of your time and this very slight and often moving story about a financially struggling lawyer and wrestling coach who takes on looking after a client's young troubled grandson sees him again in fine form. The characters, the script, the drama vs comedy, it's all really well balanced and it's always honest to its emotional core. — CRAIG MILLER

TV

Dexter, Showcase, 8.30pm

In the penultimate episode of season six, Dexter finds himself at the yacht where the next tableau, "Wormwood", was being prepared. But he learns that something more terrifying is also being planned. Meanwhile, Quinn is worried that Batista has not been seen since the previous day, so sets off to find him. — TIM MARTAIN

Pop tweets



Jon Hendren
@fart san jose, ca
I write jokes for the computer.
www.somethingawful.com

I think what scares me most about space is the fact that all those dead dogs from the '50s and '60s are still orbiting overhead, ever watching.



Jennifer Bennett
@Jen-Bennett
Sydney, Australia
Journalist. I was given a taxidermied puffer fish for my 30th birthday.

When does trollweek end?

It's high time

Tasmania is an island state, but it deserves to be properly – and fairly – connected to the rest of Australia, writes Peter Brohier

NEXT month marks 20 years of lobbying for Bass Strait transport equality.

Our first committee formed after a public meeting in Burnie two decades ago. Shortly after, TT-Line supported the belief that by "bringing the cost of surface travel across Bass Strait to a level which equates to that of a similar distance over land", the result would be "a dramatic increase in tourist numbers benefiting the economies of many regions in south-east Australia".

This view was also reflected by the most united commercial support for any issue for Tasmania, ever.

Endorsement by public mandate followed. The Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme (BSPVES) was introduced to deliver that outcome. The Coalition accepted Bass Strait as part of the national highway. The national sea highway principle continued to justify BSPVES funding.

Despite the BSPVES's initial success, its full potential is still to be reached. It is critical the scheme now reverts to its former sound policy and not be principally refocused on "driving holidays for mainlanders".

A national sea highway offering all industries direct access to people is necessary, not mainly flow-on benefits from a more targeted Tasmanian tourism sector.

Enhancement of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES) to allow Tasmanians fair trade advantages of south-bound equalisation of consumables and to

cover Tasmania's international exports is necessary.

The federal equalisation schemes remain important for Tasmania, but it is more vital that they deliver actual travel and freight cost "equalisation", and not favour some sectors at the expense of others.

If subsidisation for some industries is necessary, this needs to be in addition to an equalised link.

From 1986, uncapped BSPVES funding was enough for full comprehensive equalisation of people and vehicles.

Last year under the BSPVES, the Commonwealth paid about the same as the total cost of prime minister Paul Keating's 1996 Bass Strait proposal.

The Keating alternative was likely to offer full equality for all sea passengers and their vehicles for a decade.

A Coalition offer for highway-based indexation was not taken up. In 2001, a further offer of \$50 sea

passenger fares by prime minister John Howard was also rejected by some in Tasmania.

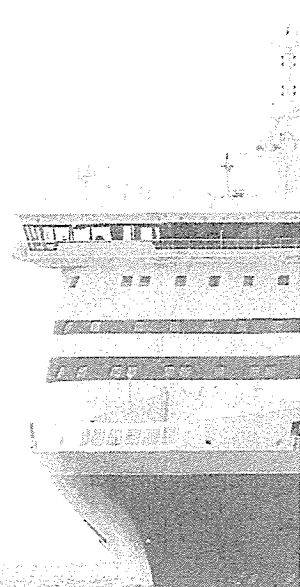
Victoria asked for a vital AusLink transport connection over Bass Strait. Apparently Tasmania didn't.

So is Tasmania's economic plight partly of its own making?

Despite this, Tasmanian businesses still try. To us they seem like boxers being forced to fight with a hand unnecessarily tied behind their back.

Ironically, Tasmania may now reduce its public facilities.

When will all this stop? Is Tasmania becoming a holiday isle



with fewer people and services? Tasmania must take full advantage of hard-fought-for federal offers.

Last year we attended a transport forum in Launceston addressed by Tasmanian Government representatives. In Launceston some attendees advanced old arguments against a national highway connection. These had been dismissed by major federal parties well over a decade ago.

Prime ministers Keating and Howard offered Tasmania the same

Warm waters bring unexpected visitors

WITH all the talk about warming sea temperatures, I am continually amazed at the different species being caught around the state – a fact that is creating much discussion.

Reports of small snapper off Seven Mile Beach last week, flying fish over the Continental Shelf and 70cm snapper being caught between Tarcuna and Tinderbox have raised many eyebrows.

High surface sea temperatures are nothing new, it just seems as if they have arrived early this year.

My records indicate that most sea temperatures at this time of year are hovering about the 18C mark and reach as high as 22C in late February. This was the case about 10 years ago, which was a great year for yellowfin on the East Coast and kingfish at the Tamar Heads.

As the summer progresses, I think we will continue to see an influx of species not normally caught throughout the year.

Reports of calamari squid being caught around the state are continuing, but it seems like every



CARL HYLAND
Salt water

person is targeting them. This may be why the species seems to be reluctant to take hold of squid jigs. Angling pressure and an abundance of food seem to be putting them off.

I wish I could say that a particular jig or bait would work, but it seems pot luck is the rule.

Sometimes a small tempter in the form of a piece of bait on a jig will bring them undone.



SNAP TO IT: A snapper caught off Seven Mile Beach on squid bait. Picture: TED NEWSTEAD

King George whiting are also being caught at various locations. Land-based anglers at Seven Mile Beach are faring well, with a number of this species being caught on soft plastics.

In the Tamar, whiting are being taken over grass beds on squid and blue bait.

The addition of a small red bead to a hook or red tubing will help in the capture of these toothsome fish. I reckon a small clear popper would also work.

Leatherjackets, some reaching 48cm, are being caught at rocky



ISLAND ADVENTURE: Blake Kemmler with a 1.5-metre gummy shark caught off Bruny Island. Picture: SIMON DESMARCHELIER

platforms along the North Coast. I would suggest trying tough bait such as squid or octopus to bring these delicious fish to net.

Green scene

NEWS that English actor and fishing star Robson Green is visiting the state has more than a few people excited.

Best known in angling circles for his pay-TV show *Extreme Fishing*,

Robson can turn an everyday fishing trip into a spectacular documentary, with funny quotes and action on the side.

I believe he will be chasing tuna out of Eaglehawk Neck in a fishing contest with Tuna Club members, plus chasing mako shark on the North Coast.

A number of smaller mako shark have been caught recently off the North Coast and out of Pirates Bay.

tomorrow

Despite three upcoming films about Marilyn Monroe, she is always the sex object, never the subject, writes Rebecca Fitzgibbon

for strait talking



WAVE OF INTEREST: Tourism continues to be big business for Tasmania.

fair access that every other region and state already enjoys. They tried their very best.

All other regions are already connected to the national transport grid. They can do very little to change their economic destiny.

But Tasmania can do something. It has federal national highway undertakings, uncapped equalisation funding, unrivalled natural attractions and enough

shipping capacity to fairly link Bass Strait.

Tasmania can benefit immediately from its proximity to the nation's largest population corridor without destroying its own natural advantages.

Last year in Canberra the message was that Tasmania was not seeking full "sea highway" equality for Tasmanians and their businesses. We are at a loss to know why.

All other states rely on equitable surface connections. It is time elected representatives and bureaucracies actively pursued the very sound arguments that we have used from 1992 – or frankly, in the interests of transparency, disclose a substantive reason for any alternative approach.

Also, explain why the mandates of the people should be disregarded.

Governments need to fix what prime minister Howard described as the "greatest impediment to the growth of population, investment and jobs", and also take prime minister Keating's advice to use Tasmania's "natural and developed strengths".

Tasmania will no longer need to claim disadvantage as an island state and to seek additional unnecessary subsidies.

Tasmanians can enjoy more job opportunities, more investment and an all-year, consistently low-priced surface link to family and friends as their birthright as an equal state of the

Commonwealth – not just "equalisation" subsidies that can be removed by Canberra at will.

Discussions with governments have not yet resolved this matter. Tasmanian businesses continue to lose billions, while governments do not deliver this reasonable and equitable whole-of-state solution.

In view of mixed messages and unfounded arguments repeated in Launceston, we ask that a high-level meeting be convened by the Premier

of Tasmania so that those who have fought so long and so effectively for Tasmania can be heard.

The issue of Bass Strait access needs to be finally and frankly dealt with.

Our textbook campaign is now resulting in a textbook failure of the democratic process. Personal and business expectations of those supporting the introduction of the BSPVES and federal taxpayers who continue to fund it are not being met.

Tasmanian tourism priorities alone cannot be expected to drive the economy of southeastern Australia in the way that a Bass Strait link to the billion-dollar national highway network can.

The view expressed by TT-Line some 20 years ago remains true today.

Some may dismiss all this as history. They may be satisfied with benefits from TFES and the BSPVES and fear change.

We should build on history, not disregard it.

The impact of a consistently priced sea highway on every industry from growth across the whole south-eastern Australian sector can be immediate.

In the interests of every Australian, including younger stakeholders, we ask the Premier of Tasmania to use her best endeavours to fairly adjust the application of the equalisation schemes to properly link Tasmania to the rest of our nation. We call on the Prime Minister to do likewise.

Tasmania will always be an island, but it is also a state of the Commonwealth. There can be no common wealth unless Tasmania is effectively connected.

● Peter Brohier was chairman of the former Committee for Bass Strait Transport Equality and the National Sea Highway Committee.

You it Third-party insurance hike

I really do not understand this story at all. It is because their \$1 billion investment portfolio lost \$60 million and they "only" made a \$51 million profit that the prices are rising? Are they being told that they are to increase their premiums by the State Government because they want more, or are they just being greedy? Michelle Evans, of Hobart

This article compares apples to oranges. Queensland may have cheaper insurance, but the benefits are far, far lower. For example, motorcyclists are not covered at all, and can't get alternative cover. The most common civil action in Queensland now is motorcyclists suing drivers for damages. There is also no long-term support for injured drivers, they get a simple payout, which usually covers them for 10 years. After that who knows! Leigh McClean, of Queensland

JOIN THE DEBATE

themercury.com.au

MAIB's investment portfolio lost \$60 million in value since June, but still made a profit of \$51 million! Well, wonders will never cease – I'm sure that there are hundreds of Australians' superannuation investments who also have lost a great deal of money. I wonder how these people (most likely self-funded) are going to generate more income – they can't very well put up their prices to cover these contingencies. Elena Anderson, of Hobart

What's new? Every dollar out of my pocket means one less dollar I will spend in the retail sector. Can the Government, CBEs and local councils not see that people are struggling? Something has to give. Simon Douglas, of Seattle

HOT SPOTS

PENSTOCK LAGOON: Reports have indicated that the fishing has been tough over the past couple of weeks. Boat anglers are having the most success. Possum emergers, floating nymphs and shaving brushes are all recommended patterns, with loch-style techniques also accounting for fish. Fishing a large mudeye pattern just after dark can also be effective.

GREAT LAKE: Lure anglers will do well trolling and drift spinning over the next two months, with traditional cobra patterns and deep-divers such as Stump Jumpers, Nilsmasters, flatfish and large rapalas all being effective. Fly anglers will do well on bright, warm days.

LAKE PEDDER: Trolling anglers are doing well in low light conditions.

TYENNA, STYX RIVERS: With low flows fish can be "spooky" at times. When the levels are high, lure anglers will do well with celtas, soft plastics and bibbed minnows, while in slower flows the fly anglers will have the advantage where emergers, caddis and hopper patterns will be readily accepted. Fishing on last light is recommended.

Hatches spark catches for hard workers



PHILLIP
ELLERTON
Angling

DUE to the recent bout of warm weather, dun and spinner hatches, along with gum beetle falls, have been keeping fly anglers busy.

Though the fishing has been very tough at times, rewards are there for those prepared to put in the time.

Recommended waters include Lake Fergus, Little Pine Lagoon, Great Lake and the Nineteen Lagoons.

Trout can be expected to be found feeding along the edges of drop-offs and fish-holding structures such as weed beds and pin rushes.

Late afternoons and into the evenings are the best times to fish.

In bright sunny conditions when



WHAT A DAY: Another magic morning in the Blue Peaks.

there are no fish visibly feeding from the surface, parraviding has been worthwhile, as is searching likely-looking spots with a black nymph.

Bruce Gibson's parachute black spinner is a proven pattern, as is the humble red tag.

Of interest to those who regularly fish the Bradys Chain is that Hydro Tasmania is undertaking repair and maintenance work on the Bronte Canal.

This work is best achieved if Bronte Lagoon is drawn down to below the canal weir crest height (684.3m) to limit water washing over

the weir due to wave action in Bronte Lagoon. The weir is located at the downstream end of the canal at the bridge over the Lyell Highway.

To allow work in the canal, Bronte Lagoon will be lowered to 684.1m, which is 0.4m lower than the preferred angling minimum water level. The planned duration of the drawdown of the lagoon is from February 6 to March 9.

The Inland Fisheries Service and MAST will be taking advantage of the lower levels to repair and extend some boat ramps in the area. The Inland Fisheries Service plans to

LAKE LEVELS

VARIATION from full supply levels, minus metres issued by Hydro Tasmania.

Arthur's	1.48, steady
Bradys	2.21, steady
Bronte	1.07, steady
Great Lake	10.08, steady
Burbury	5.36, steady
Echo	5.73, steady
Gordon	15.34, steady
King William	1.71, steady
Mackenzie	7.15, steady
Mackintosh	1.11, steady
Meadowbank	0.55, steady
Murchison	7.52, steady
Pedder	1.27, steady
Piemont	0.59, steady
Pimsoil	0.86, steady
Rosebery	0.93, steady
Rowallan	4.61, steady
St Clair	1.84, steady
Laughing Jack	3.16, steady
Little Pine	0.52, steady
Penstock	0.32, steady

relocate fish from Bronte Canal to Bradys Lake before work takes place inside the canal.

Any questions should be directed to the Hydro Tasmania project manager, Andrew Runnby, phone 1300 360 441.

Saturday soapbox

Sea highway

The spirit of Federation is being invoked in a bid to inspire Tasmania's integration into the national economy, writes Peter Brohier



EYE IN THE SKY: A 2003 photograph of the Earth as seen from the International Space Station. Picture: NASA

Measuring up to a life on the edge

LAST week I wrote about Iran's space monkey, which was recently sent into space on a suborbital flight.

The word "suborbital" means that the craft did not actually orbit the Earth, but simply went up and down again without completing a revolution of our planet.

Indeed, many craft have been launched with the intention of completing only a suborbital flight. For example, this has included rockets sent to great altitudes for research. In addition, there have been several crewed flights of this kind, the most famous of which was US astronaut Alan Shepard's flight in early May 1961. During his 15-minute flight, he became the first American in space, and this feat was repeated by Virgil Grissom two and a half months later.

This was at a time when the US was behind the Soviet Union in the space race, with the Soviets having already actually orbited Yuri Gagarin before Shepard's flight.

However, we can say that Shepard, Grissom and several others have indeed completed suborbital flights that took them into space.

This brings us to the question of where space actually begins. When in an aeroplane, have you ever wondered how close you are to the "edge of space"?

There are actually two definitions of this altitude. The most commonly accepted one is that space begins at an altitude of 100km, and it is interesting to see how this came about.

An aircraft stays aloft because of the presence of air: the design of the wing provides lift to the entire structure, when the aircraft is moving. This applies from the smallest light aircraft to a giant A380 - no aircraft can fly without lift provided by the movement of the craft in relation to the air. As we reach greater and greater altitudes, the atmosphere becomes increasingly thin, dramatically reducing the amount of lift that can be generated.

In the 1950s, Theodore von Kármán (1891-1963), a Hungarian-American scientist, put forward the idea that the edge of space could be defined as the altitude above which an aircraft would need to travel so fast in the attempt to generate enough lift that it would be travelling at orbital velocity. In other words, at that altitude and above, aircraft would not fly normally using lift - they would effectively be in orbit.

Von Kármán found that this altitude was quite close to 100km, and so this became more or less accepted as a good definition for where space begins. It became known as the "Kármán line".

There is another definition that is possible. This one states that space could be considered to begin at the lowest altitude at which a craft can complete at least one orbit without needing to be powered. Even above 100km, there is notable atmospheric drag, and it is necessary for the craft to have a thrust to counteract this drag.

It turns out that this altitude is about 150km for a circular orbit.

So there is no clear-cut "start" to space, but the 100km altitude is the most accepted.

Alan Shepard did indeed go into space, as his Mercury-Redstone mission took him to 157km. And Iran's monkey, if indeed it did reach 120km, has been into space and has joined the suborbital club.

● Martin George is curator at the Launceston Planetarium.



MARTIN GEORGE
Space

ANDREW Wilkie this week moved to significantly reduce transport costs for people and freight crossing Bass Strait by sea in line with national highway travel.

The Denison independent MP's motion, seconded by Queensland independent Bob Katter, will be debated in the House of Representatives in March, before a national audience.

All political parties will need to declare their support or otherwise.

The issue will go to the core of Federation.

Wilkie and Katter have proposed enhancement of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme to cover the effective movement of all people and all freight.

By extending this scheme this way, they will not impact on the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme, which could then presumably be directed to the movement of all vehicles.

Bass Strait has been described as "the most serious impediment to the growth of population, investment and jobs for Tasmania" and as "Tasmania's lifeline".

Wilkie and Katter have focused on building a foundation towards self-sufficiency for Tasmania - not continuing a case of dependence on federal subsidies.

In 1998, community interests and business united on both sides of Bass Strait. They called on the Australian Government to link our nation by a "national sea highway" between Victoria and Tasmania.

Prime ministers Keating and Howard tried to fully equalise the cost of moving people and passenger vehicles to meet that call.

The Howard Coalition promised to make Bass Strait "part of the national highway". The Coalition, in



WILKIE



KATTER

government, then offered uncapped, demand-driven funding under the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme.

The highway justification for continuation of this "equalisation" scheme was later advanced by federal Labor when it regained government.

Despite all this, a fair link has not eventuated - just more subsidies.

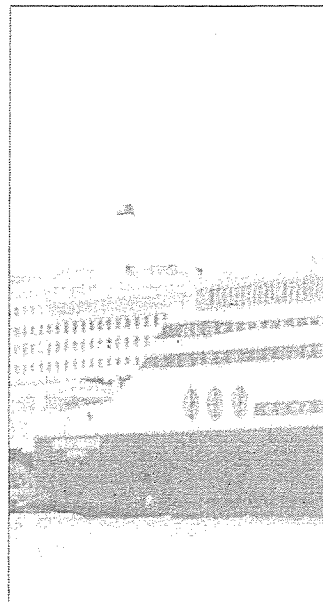
Before Federation, the sea lanes provided the colonies with transport equity. The Federal Government facilitated interstate rail and then road links costing billions. Other states advanced and Tasmania fell back.

Existing federal Bass Strait equalisation schemes now do not deliver 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, as a consequence, not adequately connected to the nation's multi-billion-dollar transport grid.

This gap is a major factor in Tasmania's current economic plight. The same impact would occur if any region were cut off by floods for an extended period.

Foot passengers, passengers in vehicles, many vehicles, south-bound



consumables including building materials, furniture, and international exports from Tasmania are not covered by existing equalisation schemes.

Many mainland manufacturers pay one price south-bound - but the same goods north-bound attract a federal subsidy.

In 1901, the colonies federated with the aim of achieving "an integrated national economy".

The Wilkie-Katter motion, in the spirit of Federation, seeks full integration of the Tasmanian economy into the national economy.

Their proposal makes sound financial sense and, if implemented, will directly and promptly drive many industries, including service industries needing people, across

SUNDAY SOAPBOX: Tomorrow in your Sunday

Blame game plays

WAYNE Swan talked and talked in Parliament this week. And the more he talked, the worse he looked.

The disappearing mining tax - the tax that raises no revenue - has become a running joke. The butt of the joke is the Treasurer.

As Swan tried to explain why a tax forecast to raise \$2 billion this financial year yielded only \$126 million in its first six months, a deepening despondency among Labor MPs was palpable.

It was clear what many of them were thinking - that this might well be the final nail in the Government's coffin, that it is very likely one bungle too many.

Because, though Swan and Julia Gillard angrily deny they have bungled, that is the way the mining tax is seen by Joe Public.

And it is a perception no amount of argument is likely to change now. Certainly no argument from someone with Swan's decidedly



LAURIE OAKES

modest communication skills.

The minuscule revenue yield from the tax was always going to be an embarrassment for Swan but, in case it did not prove embarrassing enough, Kevin from Queensland was there to help.

Normally Kevin Rudd's actions are viewed through the prism of his well-known dislike for the woman

who deposed him as prime minister.

But he has an equal contempt for Swan and, in an interview with SKY News on Tuesday, set out to ensure that the Treasurer was squarely in the frame with Gillard in the mining tax blame game - and that he himself was distanced from it.

It has become accepted wisdom that when Gillard took over as prime minister and set out to end the war with the mining industry over the original design of the tax, she and Swan were outsmarted in negotiations by BHP Billiton, Xstrata and Rio Tinto.

It is claimed that Gillard, Swan and resources Minister Martin Ferguson conducted the negotiations themselves, and that officials from Treasury - "the ones who really understood the tax being discussed", said one newspaper report during the week - were shut out of the room.

According to this account, the big

Saturday soapbox

the road to wealth

The link will also give Tasmania the ability to be a more effective contributor to the common wealth of Australia and use its proximity to the largest population corridor in the nation to advantage.



TIRELESS: Peter Brohier has long pushed for the Federal Government to break down the Bass Strait barrier to trade.

Picture: NORM OORLOFF

southeastern Australia.

Given existing federal funding and unused infrastructure, implementation can possibly start in weeks.

As with any new land-based highway, the link will also give Tasmania the ability to be a more effective contributor to the common wealth of Australia and use its proximity to the largest population corridor in the nation to advantage.

The cost of this initiative, possibly about \$230 million a year, should not be borne by any one state. The route is half in Victoria, so notionally that is \$140 million a year each for Tasmania and Victoria.

At \$200 million a year this is a

trivial amount in the context of nation building – it's slightly above the cost of construction of one major road bypass each year – to link a whole state.

It was Canberra's choice to move from a level playing field serviced by sea lanes between the colonies to more costly road and rail links.

Without proper access to the full mainland highway network, new additional expenditure by Canberra on transport infrastructure puts Tasmania even further behind. Bass Strait is Commonwealth water and the funding and outcome is a Commonwealth responsibility.

The deal was done at Federation to integrate the Tasmanian economy

with mainland colonies. It is therefore not a matter of where the money to come from – it's largely how it's justified and directed.

As the claim for integration goes back to 1901, Bass Strait should, as a neglected inter-capital access route, enjoy a significant national priority, right now.

The original deal needs to be met – not through a begging-bowl approach.

Little attention seems to have been given to planning comprehensive transport integration with Tasmania. This link should now be carefully planned, implemented and maintained under Commonwealth control as are land-based highways –

at the most efficient cost to Federal taxpayers.

In the unlikely event that the major parties do not support the Wilkie-Katter motion, they will be moving to impose unnecessary isolation on our island state without justification.

They will be curtailing freedom of movement of all Australians to and from Tasmania, dividing our nation while discriminating between links over water and costly highways over rivers and mountains, and perpetuating unfair trade between states. They will also be restricting competition policies, maintaining uncertain and inconsistent access costs between states, lowering the standard of living in Tasmania, and

about the author

PETER Brohier was born in Devonport on Tasmania's North-West Coast, but was raised in Victoria and South Australia.

He worked in Tasmania as a solicitor, during which time he witnessed the economic struggle our island state faces.

About 20 years ago Mr Brohier held a meeting in the Burnie Civic Centre in a bid to generate community support to pressure the Federal Government to act on the Bass Strait barrier to trade.

He became chairman of the former National Sea Highway Committee.

Mr Brohier continues to fight for equity for Tasmanians.

under-utilising public and private investment. They will also be destroying opportunity for critical mass for many businesses and activities needing people, and skewing access in a way never present on any road.

They will be depriving the whole of southeastern Australia of an effective driver of growth.

Bass Strait affects almost every activity in Tasmania and its inter-relationship with the rest of Australia. It is also about the relationship of the rest of our nation with Tasmania.

The Wilkie-Katter call is one embedded in history. It has critical social and economic relevance, right now.

Their motion deserves not just a win but the unanimous vote of the House of Representatives, recognising that our whole nation has a direct or indirect interest in the outcome.

Tasmanian, bushfire expert David Bowman warns that Tassie is set to explode

out over a political mine field

three mining companies effectively authored the new tax themselves, and were able to ensure they paid as little as possible.

Not surprisingly, Tony Abbott and Co have had great fun with this version of events, at Swan's expense. In fact, it is not true that Treasury officials were shut out of the process.

The crucial stage in negotiations occurred when Government representatives and mining company executives found that Treasury's assumptions about the likely impact of the tax and the industry's own assumptions differed widely.

In particular, Treasury's forecasts for commodity prices were considerably lower than the industry's. Also there was uncertainty about the value of mining company assets, the starting base for the tax.

Eventually the Government representatives proposed that each

side simply open their books to the other. The miners agreed.

Swan's chief advisers and the number-crunchers from the mining companies assembled in a ground-floor room in the Treasury building with all the Treasury experts.

Spreadsheets were projected on the wall and discussed line by line. Information was compared and debated. Numbers were run.

Assumptions were tested. The session went late into the night. "Exhaustive and exhausting" is the way one participant describes it.

Unfortunately for Swan – with newspapers running headlines such as "How Canberra Got Diddled" – the horse has bolted. The idea that he and Gillard let the big miners make chumps of them will stick.

With his SKY interview, Rudd helped to make the mining tax an issue in the growing speculation about Gillard's leadership.

It is also dividing the anti-Rudd



TALKATIVE: Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan.

forces, with some Gillard backers openly criticising Swan's shortcomings as a salesman and communicator.

However, when it comes to the

question of whether Gillard gets the chop and Rudd returns to the prime ministership, the mining tax is a two-edged sword.

In his SKY News attempt to lump Swan and Gillard with all the blame, Rudd asserted that the idea for the tax "came from the Henry Review, which was established by the Treasurer".

This conveniently overlooked the fact that the tax review headed by then Treasury secretary Ken Henry resulted from Rudd's own 2000 summit in 2008 and was announced by Rudd, not Swan, on the ABC's 7.30 Report.

Rudd is rewriting history.

Swan certainly pushed for the mining tax ahead of the 2010 Budget. If you believe the mining companies, he also failed to consult with them properly.

But Rudd, as prime minister at the time, cannot avoid responsibility.

Distracted by other matters, he did not focus on the tax until hostilities with the mining companies had got out of hand. And, as was his habit, he did not bother with the kind of Cabinet discussion that might have helped to avoid the crisis.

A senior Labor figure who supported Gillard in the past but now despairs of her puts it this way: "Sure this hurts us. But how can we change leaders if the new leader is the one that caused the problem in the first place?"

© Laurie Oakes is political editor for the Nine Network. His column appears every Saturday in the Mercury.

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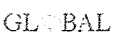
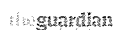
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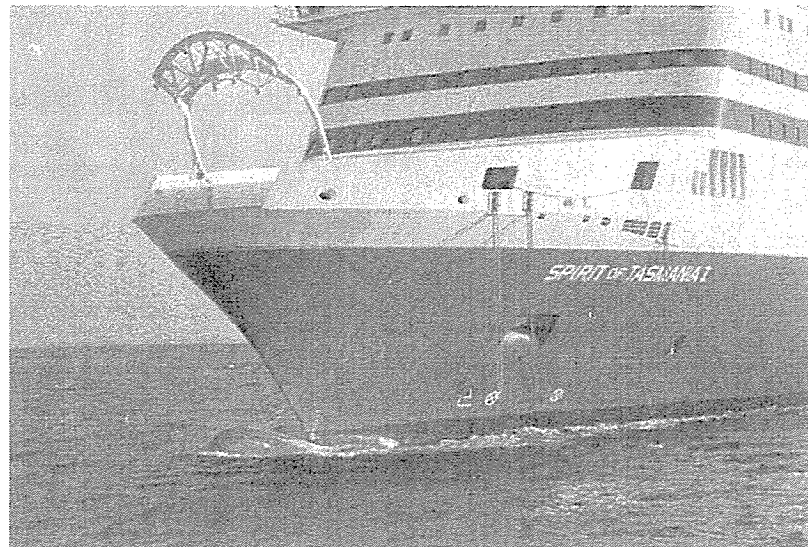


Articles

Bass Strait: The Tasmanian Government can act right now

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Peter Brohier. Pic: Wiki Commons
13.09.13 12:30 pm
1 comments



BASS STRAIT - The way ahead under an Abbott Coalition can be very positive but the Tasmanian Government can also act right now

The Abbott Government is expected to shortly engage the Productivity Commission and the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission in a joint review of both Federal Bass Strait equalisation schemes on grounds of equity and efficiency.

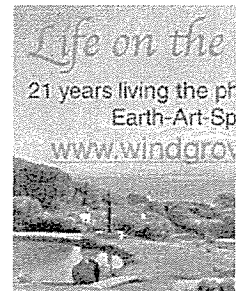
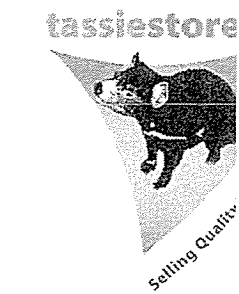
For equity and its economy, Tasmania deserves to have the same surface and air links as other states.

A federal review process will presumably allow consideration of existing restraints on the movement of people, all types of vehicles, and freight. Such review is important for the whole Tasmanian economy.

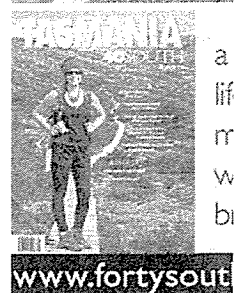
Facilitating the movement of people, with a vehicle or without, and being able to travel for any purpose is critical. Bass Strait shipping should be seen as adjunct to and be compatible with the existing national highways it connects.

Whilst a part of the accommodation sector seems to be adequately catered for by the existing status quo, the singular focus of federal support for accompanied vehicles for driving holidays for mainlanders, holiday packages or travel experiences, needs to change.

The accommodation sector plays an important role in the Tasmanian economy and can measure precisely its impact on the economy. What can't be measured as well is the opening of a comprehensive highway based transport link connecting the capital cities of Hobart and Melbourne - for the first time since the sea lanes alone connected the colonies. It is reasonably believed by many that the drawing potential of such a link can be very substantial.



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Many Tasmanian service industries are larger than the accommodation and food services sector. Such industries need access to people as a vital part of doing business. They need all year, highway fare equivalence to guarantee them access to greater numbers of customers, not just those with a focus on driving holidays.



These service industries together have a far greater chance of growing the Tasmanian economy than a trickle down economic impact from the relatively smaller accommodation sector benefitting from driving holiday packages.



Redirection of federal funding, whilst maintaining equalisation, will treat all industries equally. It will also provide the opportunity for retaining Tasmanian residents by increasing the amenity of living in Tasmania through low cost, every-day, consistently priced access to the rest of Australia.



With this support, sufficient critical mass may be achieved for many industries and activities. Overheads of businesses across Tasmania can be spread over more customers and offer the possibility of lower prices for many goods and services. Also a competitive air and sea access policy, as exists with between all other states, should be of advantage.



The Abbott Coalition says it intends to also review the existing freight equalisation scheme. All sea freight needs to be covered. Southbound coverage of consumables, will allow Tasmanians the benefits of fair competition that others interstate enjoy. Lower prices can be expected.



As part of a completely equitable surface link or national sea highway, international exports will then be able to be carried as on any other part of national transport network, at highway equivalent costs. WTO concerns or relying on just a direct international shipping link to Tasmania, if it ever eventuates, will no longer be a difficulty.



Any ships from Asia bringing in consumables direct to Tasmania should also justifiably need to compete with consumables from the mainland, to be fair to mainland suppliers. Such is the case with international shipping services directly connecting other Australian ports.



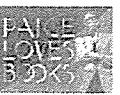
The impact of an equitable link can be immediate. There is large unused shipping capacity available, many under- utilised ports and uncapped and relatively untargated federal equalisation funding. Significant drivers of wealth in Tasmania can promptly take advantage of a fully equalised sea highway to the largest population corridor in Australia at Tasmania's doorstep.



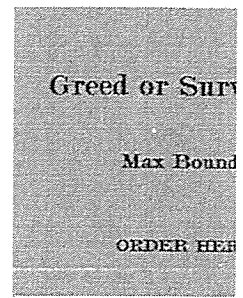
A comprehensive sea link can make Tasmania, rich with natural and developed strengths, far more productive and turn an existing sea barrier into a highway. Funding a better link to Tasmania is also economically dry as all other states are already fairly connected.



Efficiencies can result - shorter and quicker crossings, higher passenger vehicle ratios by encouraging more passengers per vehicle, savings to the Commonwealth by some leaving car at home and travelling as foot passengers, as passenger traffic increases less carbon emissions per passenger, better use of public and private investment on both sides of Bass Strait, greater freight movements and other efficiencies through better integration of the economies of Victoria and Tasmania. Air series to Tasmania may increase with a more viable economy. Many types of other services across Tasmania can also improve.



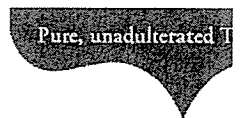
This review can be about getting the corridor and the economy of Tasmania working better, once and for all. It would be very hard for any ACCC or Productivity Commission review, established with sufficient terms of reference, to find against fair interstate linkages and the need for same competition policies as are enjoyed by all other states.



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What should not be forgotten is that the Howard Coalition promised Tasmania that Bass Strait would be part of the National Highway and accepted that “the Federal Government has a special responsibility to achieve equality for Tasmanians in developing opportunities for their state”. Consistent with this undertaking, the Abbott Coalition continues to well fund two major equalisation schemes, both introduced by the Coalition, and is, now appropriately, to review them.


Application of federal equalisation schemes that skew or limit access or favour some industries over others should have no place on an interstate inter-capital national sea highway needed and used by all.

With a rapidly approaching Tasmanian state election, it should be remembered that the impact of one of the federal equalisation schemes can be easily redirected, right now, by the Tasmanian Government through its TT Line. This move could go along way to deliver transport equality for both passengers and vehicles.

Given the current state of the economy, it would be a pity if the Tasmanian Government chose not to take more advantage of this very valuable asset, obtained largely as a result of a public campaign for Bass Strait transport equality.

• **Mercury: New Lyons MP questions TT-Line’s interstate commitments**

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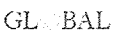
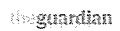
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Prime Minister told: It is Time!

Peter Brohier. First published September 2
04.09.13 5:05 am
3 comments

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ABC: Kevin Rudd's defence of gay marriage goes viral, here

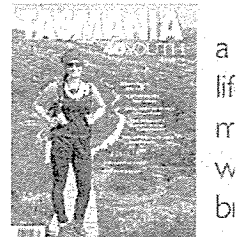
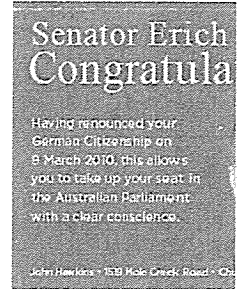
From the early 1990's, a national sea highway crossing Bass Strait using shipping and catering for the movement of both people and vehicles, pegged to the cost of highway travel, has been supported by the public. Also, by major business interests across South Eastern Australia - and more recently support for a comprehensive scheme covering freight.

National Highway promises followed, aimed at giving Tasmanians transport equality and a link to the National Highway. This link was expected to increase tourism and build population, investment and jobs. A federal equalisation scheme was then introduced in 1996.

Following the introduction, Bass Strait policies in both Tasmania and Canberra seem to have focussed on trying to meet the primary needs of some within the Tasmanian accommodation sector.

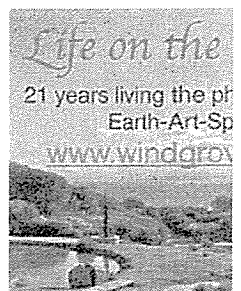
The scheme has encouraged, instead of the movement of people, the movement of accompanied vehicles as part of leisure travel or driving holidays. The highway equalisation formula and indexing has been removed and replaced by CPI indexing. The scheme has been left without a mechanism to put downward pressure on total fares.

Participants in this type of holiday market are few when compared with the numbers that regularly use a short distance land-based highway- say the Midland Highway. Many holiday package travellers may not be as sensitive to the price of access as regular A to B travellers.



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Regardless, it is critical that the various needs of these A to B highway travellers must be met. Travellers that regularly use highways need consistently, low highway equivalent fares. Also, there are some that require fair sea highway access just to decide to stay in Tasmania.



Substantial service industries and public and private institutions across Tasmania need access to such travellers and as residents. Many of these industries and activities, individually and together, make a significantly larger contribution to the Tasmanian economy than the accommodation sector.



A full NSH, covering people and all vehicles - also all freight, save for bulk cargo and including for the first time, coverage of southbound consumables and northbound international exports is needed.



Strangely policies, other than sea highway policies, seem to have influenced Bass Strait for many years. There appears to be very little known within government about the positive economic and social impact of a National Sea Highway.



The TCCI report, which acted as a catalyst for the introduction of a federal equalisation scheme, looked at this wider issue. Little further government analysis has emerged for over 15 years.



A federal equalisation scheme, mainly applied to vehicles, cannot go anywhere near supporting a broad-based state economy that needs direct access to people - not just accompanied vehicles.



The whole Bass Strait policy focus from Tasmania to Canberra needs to change. The major political parties have the opportunity and duty to deliver a sea highway open to and advantaging all.



Regardless of what federal equalisation schemes were, or now have become, all Australians, their motoring bodies, and those that require the movement of passengers in cars and foot passengers, have sought national highway access into Tasmania. It is in the combined interests of major wealth generators within Tasmania that highway equivalent surface access for people is facilitated, and equalisation is not just about moving federally funded cars.



Canberra could not survive without both air and highway surface links - neither can Tasmania. The movement of people crossing Bass Strait by sea should build a comprehensive tourism industry, not detract from it.



It is time for the Prime Minister to announce a change of direction. Defence of the status quo raises very difficult questions and will limit the right of all industries to fairly integrate their activities into a national economy. Tony Abbott has already opened the door to a review. The Prime Minister is yet to respond.



Switzerland has an open border transport policy - why not for the Switzerland of the south? Transport equity, the need for equal links between states, policies that make sound economic sense to all, federal mandates and the needs of people and business across Australia require it.



• Last week on Tasmanian Times: Call for an apology for Bass Strait schemes that isolate Tasmania



• Earlier on Tasmanian Times: Madam Premier: It is Time to Act, includes link at the end to previous Peter Brohier articles, including a Q&A



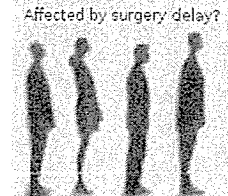
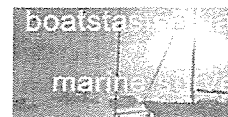
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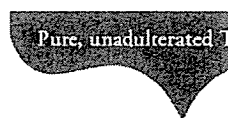
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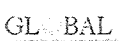
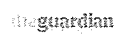
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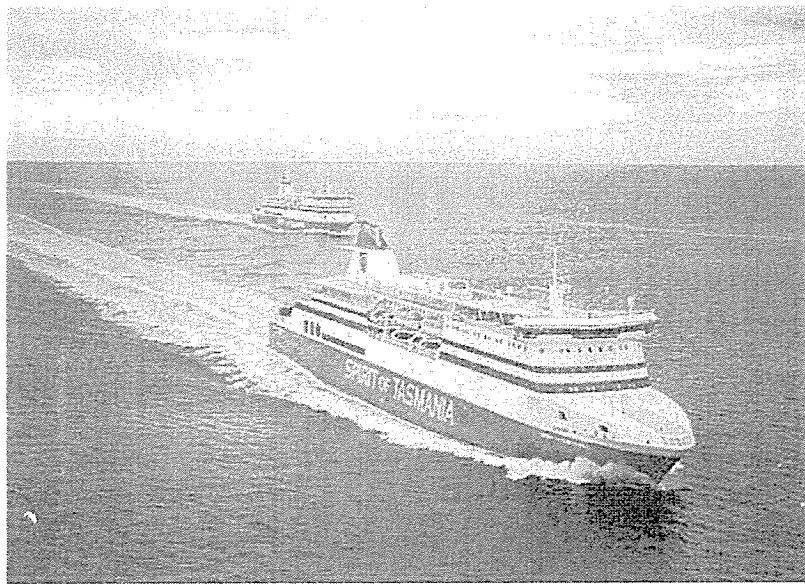


Articles

Call for an apology for Bass Strait schemes that isolate Tasmania

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Peter Brohier*. First published August 29
30.08.13 5:10 am
1 comments



Peter Brohier, Chairman of the former National Sea Highway and Bass Strait Transport Equality Committee's, in Hobart today called on the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition to, on attaining government, investigate and then if appropriate apologise, for Canberra not meeting its responsibility to deliver equal transport links for Tasmania.

Also, for allowing "equalisation" to be skewed and substantially redirected after an election resulting in a mandate for transport equality for the affordable movement of people across Bass Strait being largely ignored.

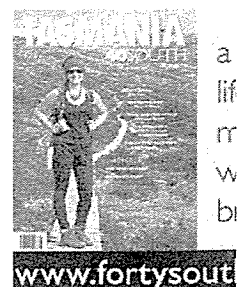
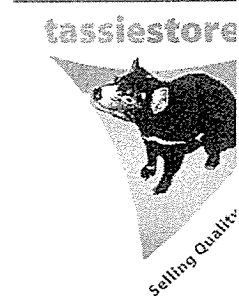
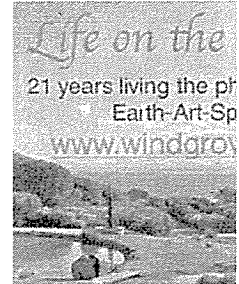
Mr Brohier said, "These omissions had curtailed the public use of Tasmania's only surface artery, caused under-utilisation of Tasmania's natural and developed strengths and required our nation to give greater welfare support to Tasmania than was necessary.

He also called on the nation's leaders to deliver a comprehensive and effective National Sea Highway crossing Bass Strait, using shipping. This would equalise the cost of movement of all people, vehicles and freight to the cost of highway travel. The Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme covers less than half the freight and excludes southbound consumables. These omissions adversely impacted on exports, the cost of living and jobs. Tasmanians should be allowed the advantages of competition policy, fair trade and freedom of mobility as others interstate.

The National Sea Highway campaign started in Burnie, Tasmania in the early 1990s. Tasmanians sought transport equality for people crossing Bass Strait based on a national highway link. The campaign was supported by major industry groups across



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South Eastern Australia, as it is today. In the end, Prime Minister's Paul Keating and John Howard, twice, both tried to meet the wishes of the people.

Offers to make Bass Strait part of the national highway and maintain transport equity for both people and vehicles followed. But the scheme, obtained through people power, has now become just an "accompanied vehicle scheme". It has cost federal taxpayers about half a billion dollars, so far. The highway equalisation formula has been removed leaving no mechanism to put downward pressure on total passenger or vehicles fares, or any hope of equalising them. A focus on travel experiences, facilitating driving holidays for tourists and the Tasmanian leisure market seems to now have taken its place. Our four year campaign was aimed at moving people from A to B at highway equivalence. It was not just about moving the shell of vehicles. Who would have supported that?

This is the third time that our campaign has been at the top of national politics. This only occurs when an issue is compelling. Failure to meet core Bass Strait promises and mandates, despite the provision of federal uncapped equalisation funding, brings our democratic process into question. While meeting the obligations and pressures that form part of a working democracy, Canberra has a responsibility to keep vital public interstate transport arteries open to all, equally.

An effective Bass Strait link is a critical part of our nation's birthright. It is entirely appropriate for a sovereign state which lost transport equality when road and rail took over from the sea lanes connecting the other colonies. An equalised link will restore Tasmania's connection to the integrated transport grid that covers the rest of our nation. This is a basic access and transport issue on the shortest interstate inter-capital route in Australia. Tasmania's participation in the "common-wealth" of our nation is limited by failure to effectively link Tasmania – not by its geography. As with all other inter-capital routes, air travel should not be the only option.

A full National Sea Highway is consistent with the aims of federation – to allow the colonies to integrate their economies into a national economy through the movement of both people and freight. Given the state of the Tasmanian economy, it makes sound, economically dry, financial sense to connect our nation, right now.

We welcome the Federal Leader of the Opposition's offer of a prompt review to examine equitable improvements to the Bass Strait equalisation schemes and the promise by the Palmer United Party to inject \$400 million into Tasmania's sea freight and passenger services. We await the Prime Minister's response. No amount of GST revenue paid to the Government of Tasmania can take the place of delivering fair access for all Australians to all parts of our nation, including our island state."

Written and authorised by Peter Brohier, 143 Kooyong Road, North Caulfield, Victoria.

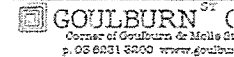
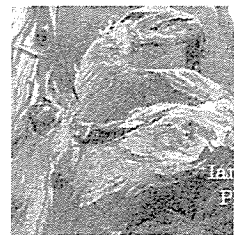
***Peter Brohier** was born in Devonport, Tasmania. He now lives in Nth Caulfield, Victoria. He is retired lawyer and Chairman of the former National Sea Highway Committee. Peter started his campaign at a public meeting at the Burnie Civic Centre about 20 years ago and has continued to fight for Bass Strait transport equity since 1992. Peter was described by Paul Lennon as the person most responsible for the introduction of the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation scheme. He is the recipient of the Australian Hotels Association -Tasmania award for outstanding services to tourism.

• Earlier on Tasmanian Times: Madam Premier: It is Time to Act, includes link at the end to previous Peter Brohier articles, including a Q&A

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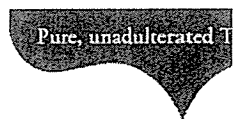
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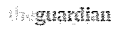
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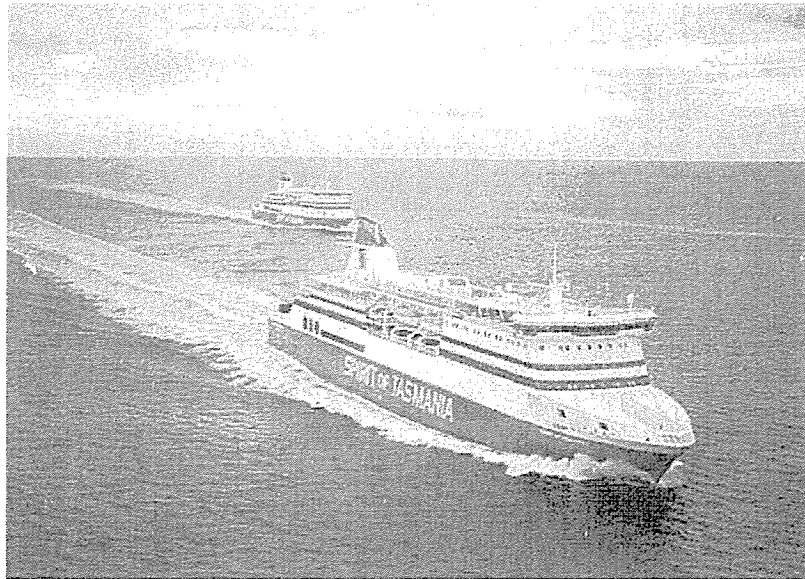
Articles

The Question of Bass Strait

Peter Brohier*

31.05.13 4:30 am

16 comments

[<Back to Articles](#)**What's wrong with sea access across Bass Strait?**

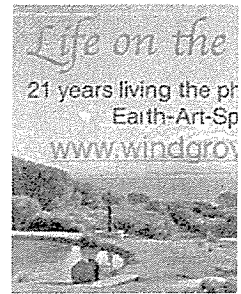
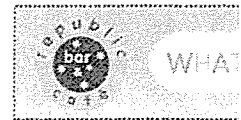
Federal equalisation schemes exclude the fair transport of people, many vehicles and about half the freight. Together the schemes do not deliver the equivalent of even the worst road in Australia. The costs of crossing also vary widely when compared with the cost of road travel leaving a level of isolation and access uncertainty not experienced across our nation. This hinders the growth of the Tasmanian economy and limits personal mobility. Its social and economic consequences are severe and are reflected in the state of the Tasmanian economy. Bass Strait remains the only gap in our national integrated transport grid.

Should Canberra throw more money at local worthwhile projects such as Bass Strait?

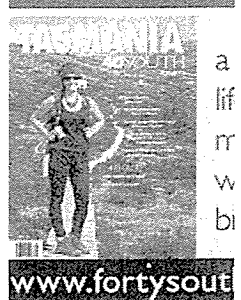
No. Its responsibility is to set the framework for a strong national economy. Bass Strait is such a project. More Federal funding for the Midland Highway without connecting it to the full National Highway grid grossly under utilises Canberra's investment. Bass Strait equalisation is about integrating two state economies for the first time since the sea lanes connected the colonies. It's about increasing investment, population and jobs on both sides of Bass Strait.

Why didn't Gillard Labor fix Bass Strait in the last budget?

The Tasmanian Government has not asked for a fair Bass Strait link. By using shipping, operating on the same principle as a bridge, Canberra can return immediate economic benefits to South Eastern Australia - less people on welfare, more jobs, more investment, more viable use of public and private infrastructure and offer a growing economy. Unlike Prime Minister's Keating and Howard, Prime Minister Gillard is yet to act.



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Has Bass Strait been described by the Howard Coalition as “the single most serious impediment to growth in jobs, investment and population for Tasmania” and by the Tony Abbott as “Tasmania’s lifeline”?



Yes – an impediment of this magnitude needs significant attention right now.



Were Tasmanians promised that the Coalition would recognise Bass Strait as “part of the national highway”?

Yes. This was the core Coalition promise in the 1996 Federal election. Prime Minister Keating also offered the equivalent of a bridge using a fast ferry offering low passenger and vehicle fares. The Howard proposal was to equalise the costs of driver and a car and to index it to the cost of road travel. Passenger fares were to fall through competition.



What has gone wrong?

No competition eventuated. Over the last thirty years well funded Federal equalisation schemes have not been adjusted to meet the needs of a modern economy or have been diverted to meet the expectations of other interests. The Bass Strait schemes urgently need to be bought back to deliver highway “equalisation”.



What is stopping the implementation of a full National Sea Highway “NSH”?

The people of Tasmania have provided a Federal mandate for a NSH. Canberra continues to pay for an uncapped, demand driven and flexible Federal highway equalisation scheme from 1996. There are no arguments of substance against it and no mandate for the status quo. Canberra can start to act immediately and, in this case, there is no need to plan and build a road.



Could Tasmania use its ferries to deliver a NSH for people and vehicles?

Yes, right now. TT Line supported the national sea highway concept and objectives prior to the introduction of the BSPVES. The Tasmanian Government could instruct its TT Line to so act - but it doesn't have to. Bass Strait remains a Federal responsibility - it's up to Canberra to set the proper framework for all Bass Strait shipping. There is no directive from Canberra to deliver highway equalisation for people and vehicles. Unlike TFES, the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme “BSPVES” now doesn't even contain a formula for equalisation – Canberra removed it. The Federal monitoring of the BSPVES also does involve or reflect the interests of a wide range of stakeholders on both sides of Bass Strait.



Why change the status quo?

It has been recently accepted that TT Line is “selling an experience” and that its mainland customers want an “end – to – end travel experience”. TT Line has acknowledged that Tasmanians want A to B travel. It seems reasonable to suspect that mainlanders, who chose not to travel with TT Line, also want the same as many Tasmanians. The Chairman of TT Line recently accepted that there is “another world”, “heavy on seats, heavy on lane metres of cars and caravans and the grey nomads” and said that he was willing to investigate that “other world”. Tasmanian business and all other activities cannot afford to have a Federal equalisation scheme facilitate “travel experiences” or be focussed mainly on “driving holidays for mainlanders” at the expense of the provision of basic A to B surface transport. The choice seems to be to benefit from a trickle down impact from tourism policies or from a huge and direct “sea highway” driver of a whole economy.



Canberra and Tasmania should not leave this vital link to the determination of one operator to assess what may be “best for Tasmania” and to operate under Tasmanian Government guidelines to “just operate commercially” - also to a Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme “TFES” that covers about half the freight.



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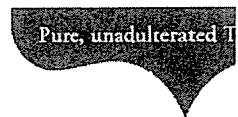
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The colonies federated to establish a national integrated economy aimed at moving people and freight across the whole nation, not just part of it. This link should now be made compatible with existing land - based highway connections that have cost billions and meet the needs of the whole Australian community, on both sides of Bass Strait.

Perhaps while Canberra fails to act to target highway equivalence, TT Line could consider offering highway-based fares whilst maintaining its existing operational passenger and freight capacity by using one of its ferries twice a day, all year, and not just for a few days over summer. TT Line could then use its other ferry to service the many ports around Tasmania, including its substantial island chain and provide passenger and freight transport and an "end to end travel experience" to the greater numbers of people who would, on a NSH, actually get to Tasmania.

The nation is in deficit – why ask for more money right now?

Currently about \$140 million a year is expended by Canberra on two equalisation schemes that look like Bass Strait Tasmanian related subsidies. A full NSH can cost Canberra about \$280 million a year. On an equalisation basis, all Federal Bass Strait funding should then be apportioned between Victoria and Tasmania as the state border is about half way across Bass Strait. A fair application of this funding will then require no increase in Tasmania's allocation as Canberra moves from subsidies to providing full NSH funding, fairly sharing the \$280 million equally between two states. Australia is not broke enough for this year's budget to contain multi-billion road and rail improvement schemes across Australia. Why omit the link to Tasmania? Bass Strait equalisation is just as vital to Tasmania as coal is to a steam engine.

What about other states or regions in Australia- don't they suffer too?

All other regions are already connected to the national integrated transport grid. Consistent, all-year, highway equivalent access is vital regardless of the terrain it crosses and whether expensive roads and bridges, or cheaper punts or ferries are used. A defective link destroys economies. More Federal and State monies are then wasted to prop up business and public facilities when this link could simply give Tasmania the artery it needs to revive its whole economy.

Is equalisation just about freight?

In a modern economy the movement of both people and freight are both just as critical. With a full NSH, international exports can be facilitated through Melbourne without World Trade Organisation objections, at highway cost.

Could Canberra reduce Tasmania's GST payments?

Yes – but Tasmania is on the shortest interstate, inter- capital route in this nation and very close to the nation's largest population corridor but It gets about the same number of interstate tourists as the remote Northern Territory. This imbalance is largely caused by access cost difficulties. GST payments don't integrate economies – highways that connect, do. Surely GST handouts should be based on need after an economy is given a chance to flourish.

Could Tasmania lose existing Bass Strait subsidies?

Bringing equalisation schemes back to their original purpose, and expanding them, removes a hand out mentality and replaces it with the highest level of justification - interstate connectivity as Tasmania's birthright from federation. Surely it's better to justify Federal payments this way. When the BSPVES was introduced TFES was not reduced. Why fear a loss now? Why encourage or allow Canberra to turn equalisation into insecure subsidies and then lament their possible loss? This approach encourages criticism of Tasmania from across Australia.

Most people travel by air so why care if Tasmania has a NSH?

The choice of modes of travel respond significantly to the price differential between air and sea. Tasmanians gave a mandate for a National Sea Highway. Highways are used over short distances. All states need an effective air and surface connection. Why not Tasmania? Consistently priced interstate surface travel is vital for Federal economic and competition policies to work. Bass Strait is not just about tourism - it's about living. That is why ferries, not cruise boats, are used for transport across the rest of the world. Air is required to compete with highway surface travel over every other interstate border - why not also between Victoria and Tasmania? Discount light luggage air travel may not be a cheap travel option after on the ground add-on costs are included. It also fails to encourage the development of better intrastate transport links. It does not produce the same level and spread of economic benefits through Victoria and Tasmania that surface travel would deliver.

But can people get into and out of Tasmania easily?

Price and capacity have been found to be the major determinants of crossing Bass Strait by sea. If consistent, all-year, highway based prices were offered, large amounts of existing under-utilised shipping capacity could be used right now. Extra capacity can be brought from the northern hemisphere in times of high demand. It's not just for the grey nomads - it's for guaranteeing ordinary Australians, including Tasmanians, the right of highway access to the rest of Australia. Many Tasmanian families just leave if they don't have fair and ready access to family and friends interstate

What about lower consumer prices?

Southbound consumables are not covered by TFES. Others interstate enjoy fair trade policies. Also with the greater access to people, overheads can be spread over a larger population base bringing down the cost of goods and services. Demand curves can move outward if certainty of access is established and maintained.

What about air services?

Air services could increase with a more vibrant internal economy. Closure of the Federal and Hume Highway links to Canberra would severely damage its economy. Canberra couldn't rely on air alone - neither can Tasmania. A level playing field is necessary across this nation for both air and surface transport treating all states equally. Currently Bass Strait schemes skew access in favour of some industries and not others.

Should Tasmanians holiday at home?

Yes, as an option, but not of necessity. Tasmania is part of Australia and its people also fund a national transport network costing billions. They should be able to enjoy fair interstate access to it at the same cost per km as others. Tasmania would then take advantage of its geographical position near the nation's largest population corridor and not see Bass Strait, or loss of its own holiday makers, as a detriment.

Could southbound equalisation hurt some Tasmanian protected industries?

Under a full NSH, these industries will benefit by greater access to an expanded local market. They can be given some time to re-adjust, if necessary. Protectionism should not be allowed to keep the price of consumables high.

What will happen to the Wilkie - Katter motion to make Bass Strait part of the National Highway?

There are now few opportunities left to have the motion debated in the House of Representatives. Gillard Labor could fix Bass Strait before its caretaker mode starts.

Given the sea highway justification of the BSPVES, the Federal mandates, the consequential uncapped federal equalisation funding over many years and the social and economic importance of a NSH, it is astonishing that a first world working


democracy can't deliver equity to the Tasmanian people and fair access to our island state.

Sadly, it would seem that the current Tasmanian or Federal Governments are unwilling or unable to fix Bass Strait – perhaps, not even after the influence of the ballot box. The nation is left to ponder - why?

** **Peter Brohier** was born in Devonport, Tasmania. He now lives in Nth Caulfield, Victoria. He is retired lawyer and Chairman of the former National Sea Highway Committee. Peter started his campaign at a public meeting at the Burnie Civic Centre about 20 years ago and has continued to fight for Bass Strait transport equity since 1992. Peter was described by Paul Lennon as the person most responsible for the introduction of the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation scheme. He is the recipient of the Australian Hotels Association -Tasmania award for outstanding services to tourism.*

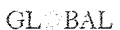
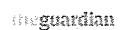
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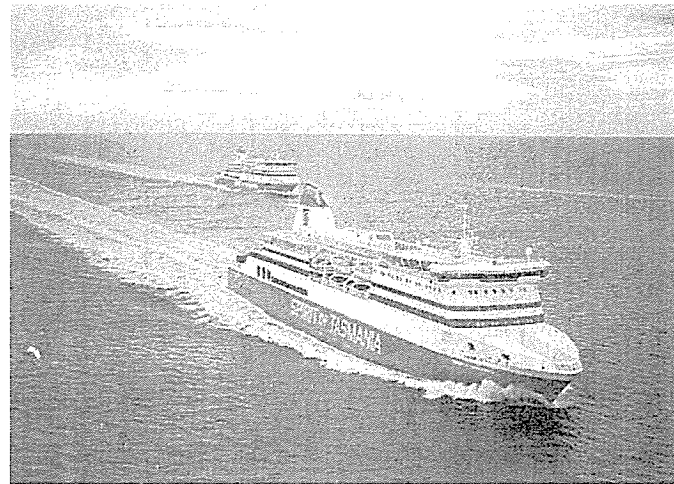
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Fairly linking Bass Strait is critical for Tasmania

Peter Brohier
09.11.11 3:21 am
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The Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra

7th November 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

Fairly linking Bass Strait is critical for Tasmania - but not as compensation for Tasmania's island status

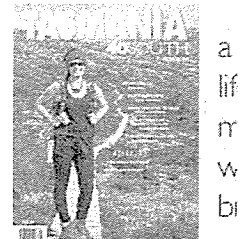
I was Chairman of the former Committee for Bass Strait Transport Equality and the National Sea Highway Committee. These public interest and commercial committees encouraged Prime Minister's Keating and Howard to try to bring equitable transport for people and vehicles across Bass Strait.

Prime Minister Keating, when rejecting the NSH committee request for the second time, said that Tasmania should use its own "natural and developed strengths" and not ask Canberra for further subsidies. He subsequently offered to fully meet our request for passenger and vehicle transport equality.

Why? Did Prime Minister Keating really discover what the Bass Strait campaign was about?

You see, Prime Minister, our recent requests for further Bass Strait funding are possibly still seen by Canberra and others as further requests for compensation.

Such is not the case. In no way should Bass Strait funding be seen as requests for further compensatory dollars paid to Tasmania. They are instead requests for equal



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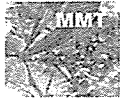
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interstate transport links as all other states enjoy. Using ferries operated on highway principles, Tasmania, its people and businesses can build a strong Tasmania.

The Commonwealth, by failing to provide such equal links, denies Tasmania the ability to effectively use or rely on its "natural and developed strengths" while offering other states equal links over mountains and deserts.

Canberra is severely restricting a state capable of making a substantial contribution to the nation. Compensating Tasmania for its island status, through further untargeted Commonwealth payments, leaves the Tasmanian Government and others to choose how that funding is applied. The result - federal compensation for Tasmania per capita is unnecessarily substantially higher than for any other state. It also has resulted in some of the weakest economic figures in the nation.

Failure to provide equal transport links wastes money and skews access, denying a fair level playing field between industries. It fails to deliver the business certainty and access required for the fair movement of people, for fair trade and exports. It adversely impacts on the conduct of all types of commercial and social activity. The consequences leave a struggling state economy, reflected by a lack of investment, population and jobs.

It is critical that Tasmania be encouraged to use its natural and developed strengths and its location, near the largest population corridor in this nation, to advantage. Canberra can start overnight to open access to Tasmania. There is unused infrastructure and very substantial Federal Bass Strait funding available now to turn the Tasmanian economy around, in days.

The original aims and outcome of the BSPVES, when introduced, proved that equal links for passengers and vehicles work. Canada can do it for its island state and for freight, why not Australia?

You have recently said that Prime Ministers need to take the hard decisions.

In this case, will you follow the lead of two Prime Ministers and restore Bass Strait equalisation schemes to deliver "equalisation", consistent with the federal mandate for transport equality?

Prime Minister's Keating and Howard both understood the need for Tasmania to have equalised access. They each took every possible step we asked for, to achieve it. Bass Strait access significantly impacts on activities across the whole of South Eastern Australia.

Prime Minister, will you minimise the need for Federal handouts by giving our nation Bass Strait links capable of allowing Tasmania and its people to fully contribute our nation's wealth? Will you accept such equal transport links as the key to development of Australia's island state, not just more and more handouts offered under the name of "equalisation"? Will you allow Tasmanians access to, and fairly close the only gap in our national inter-capital, interstate, integrated transport network? Will you prove that our democracy can deliver its mandate for equality?

Prime Minister, will you do what Prime Minister's Keating and Howard tried so very hard to do, or will your legacy leave our nation divided?

Yours sincerely,

Peter Brohier

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