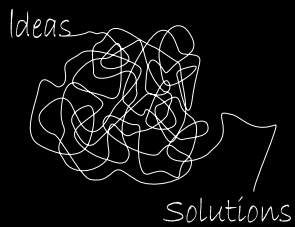


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Rail project 'prioritised'

Go ahead hinges on business case

By Sonia Isaacs

THE State Government won't promise any funding to the Sunshine Coast Direct Rail Line ahead of the outcome of a \$14m business case, despite insisting that the federal government commit \$1.6bn to the "vital" project.

A Queensland delegation led by Deputy Premier, Steven Miles, that included Deputy Mayor Rick Baberowski, last week met with Infrastructure and Transport Minister Catherine King where they urged the federal government to commit funds to the project.

The meeting followed the outcome of an independent federal review of infrastructure projects that essentially set aside previously committed funding for the Beerwah to Maroochydore rail line.

Mr Miles declared the meeting a success, telling Parliament the federal Government would back the project.

"The direct Sunshine Coast rail line will be

prioritised as part of the transport program for the 2032 Olympic Games," Mr Miles said.

When approached by GC&M News, a department spokesperson for State Transport Minister, Mark Bailey, said the business case was a critical first step towards completion of any big project.

The spokesperson acknowledged the business case was expensive and time consuming, however, without this thorough scope and investigative process, crucial questions around project cost, staging and delivery outcomes were unable to be answered.

The spokesperson confirmed the department was continuing with delivery of its detailed business case, which essentially builds on initial planning completed in 2001, well over 20 years ago as part of the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study (CAMCOS).

"The detailed business case is on track for delivery

at the end of this year, and is in the very final stages of development and approval," they said.

"Once it's completed it will then be considered by the state and federal government with outcomes anticipated in 2024. Only then decisions will be made regarding the final scope, cost and staging of works."

"The federal government's announcement (to commit funds) on November 30 does however bring forward some of their funding for early works."

The current business case includes a review of the preserved (CAMCOS) corridor to refine the alignment and station locations, and a detailed analysis of design, risks, financials, economics, environmental and community impacts and utilities.

Speaking to speculation around cost blowouts before the project even gets underway; the spokesperson said there was no denying the future



A fully-funded rail line would eventually see passengers

expense involved. "There is no denying this will be a very expensive project. The cost of rail delivery has just grown exponentially and we want to cut off this idea of a cost blowout as there has never been a business case done to this extent - so there has never been a real figure in terms of how much the end project might cost," the spokesperson said.

Sunshine Coast Rail Advocate and spokesperson for Rail Back on Track, Jeff Addison, said while he welcomed news that the DSCRL was finally gaining traction, the systematic lack of commitment towards this long-running rail project that was urgently needed more than a decade ago was "abysmal". He said the line was




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able to ride trains from Maroochydore to Brisbane.

originally meant to be built in April 2005 with an estimated cost at the time of \$1 billion to deliver. "They said it would be to Caloundra by 2015, and then to Maroochydore by 2020," he said.

"If the government had built it back then when they first announced that they were going to build it, we wouldn't be having this

discussion about funding or rail projects."

He said he also held concerns that given construction had not even started, and with the Olympics less than nine years away, that the line now would not carry all the way through to Maroochydore.

"I fear that they won't go any further than Birtinya.

And, you know, they'll blame it on the cost of staging," he said.

"Both the Redcliffe and the Springfield line are only 12 kilometre in length but it took them six years to build so if we are looking at building 37 kilometres of rail to get to Maroochydore in eight years, I just can't see that happening realistically."

"When I look over the reports and history of this project, there has just been a litany of broken promises to our region, which politicians pretend to ignore or swipe away as if it's irrelevant.

"There has been a massive underspend for our region and we have a rail service that is the worst in Australia for a region of this size. I think community is sick of the political games, and they just want to see something happen," he said.



Sunshine Coast Rail Advocate's Jeff Addison



Federal Member for Fisher, Andrew Wallace,

Federal Member for Fisher, Mr Andrew Wallace, called the project his "number one priority" and has welcomed the news, but not without reservations, highlighting broken promises on the Sunshine Coast rail project.

"Our Sunshine Coast

community has been calling for this project for three decades," he said.

"It's been my number one priority as a member of parliament - and we delivered on the funding. I echo the sentiments of my community: we will believe it when we see the first train leaving Maroochydore station.

"Everyone in the community understands the importance of the project which will take pressure off the Bruce Highway and connect the Hinterland to the Coast, so we must keep up the fight.

"State Labor wants to jam 500,000-plus people on the Sunshine Coast by 2041, but they have not stumped up a single cent to the construction of Sunshine Coast Rail." The business case is expected to be completed within weeks.

Beefy's sells to Retail Food Group

GLOBAL food and beverage group Retail Food Group (RFG) has announced the purchase of iconic Sunshine Coast pie maker Beefy's Pies for \$10 million.

RFG CEO, Matt Marshall, said there were a range of factors that attracted RFG to Beefy's including its loyal customer base, a passionate and capable team, a unique brand proposition, and a commitment to delivering exceptional product quality.

"The acquisition of Beefy's is significant not only because it is a great business that is complementary to our existing brand portfolio but because it marks the beginning of RFG's next phase of growth," he said.

Beefy's founder and CEO, Mark Hobbs, said: "We're proud of what we have achieved as a family-owned business since opening our first store in 1997. Beefy's is now a much-loved Australian brand, has nine strongly performing stores across Queensland and a manufacturing facility on the Sunshine Coast, employing 180 people

Joining the RFG network will help Beefy's take the next step in its growth journey."

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