



DERRYN HINCH'S
**JUSTICE
PARTY**

DHJP MPs Oppose Suburban Rail Loop Without Commitment for Regional Rail

7 October 2021

Derryn Hinch's Justice Party (DHJP) have opposed the Suburban Rail Loop legislation due to its unprecedented planning powers and in protest to the lack of commitment from the State Government to a long-term regional rail plan.

Stuart Grimley MP and Tania Maxwell MP are calling on the Victorian Government to support regional Victoria through equality of funding. This comes after Mr Grimley released a Parliamentary Budget Office report this month finding that the current Government is investing \$17,100 per person in assets for metropolitan residents and \$15,351 for regional residents. This demonstrates that regional Victorians are at least 11% worse off than their metropolitan counterparts when it comes to Government spending.

The DHJP MPs supported amendments put forward by the opposition that would increase consultation with Councils affected by the Suburban Rail Loop and to establish an oversight committee. Given the cost and time blowouts of current metropolitan transport projects, the MPs felt such a committee was necessary.

Mr Grimley and Ms Maxwell represent regional communities who have long been forgotten when it comes to equality of government funding, particularly with rail infrastructure. Derryn Hinch's Justice Party wants regional Victoria to receive matched per capita funding – and not just for rail projects. This would ensure that regional Victorians aren't left with sub-par public infrastructure in the future.

In Ms Maxwell's contribution to the Bill, she cited that it has been **100 years** since the Federal Royal Commission's inquiry into the unification of rail gauges that recommended standardising the network. 100. Years. Ago. And the State Government still have not committed to matching the Federal Government's \$5 million commitment to fund the business case for standardisation of the Murray Basin Rail Project.

This is just one project that the MPs would like to see funded in their regional electorates that have been consistently delayed and kicked down the road or neglected.

It is up to the government to close the gap on funding between metro and regional Victoria. Without this guarantee, DHJP MPs will not support this long-term project that will undoubtedly go over-budget and over-time, at the expense of funds for regional Victoria.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"The government is continuing to spend big money on and commit to long-term planning for metropolitan projects. I acknowledge many of these projects are important to ease congestion in the city and plan for the future, but what about the future planning for regional Victoria?"

It is extremely difficult to vote for legislation that will increase the inequality between metropolitan and regional Victoria. The last thing our state needs is to widen the divide between country and city people.

I am yet to receive an adequate response from the state Government as to why they won't fund the return of rail to the Wimmera, including costings. I'm willing to bet the cost of Wimmera rail would be tiny in comparison to the Suburban Rail Loop. This is just one example of regional Victoria missing out on much needed public transport.



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If the Government want to talk about 'return on investment', the Murray Basin Rail Project's earlier standardisation business case demonstrated a cost-to-benefit ratio of 1.7, which is the same return as that of the Suburban Rail Loop. So, where is the funding for Murray Basin Rail?

Quotes Attributable to Tania Maxwell MP:

"It is 100 years since the 1921 Royal Commission recommended standard gauge conversion across Australia's rail. The Murray Basin Rail Project will transform a fragmented rail network and deliver great benefits to our agriculture sector, yet sits stalled."

"In comparison, the Suburban Rail Loop is justified by an incomplete business case and debate around value for money, yet forges ahead."

"As regional MPs, we consistently hear from our communities how frustrated they are by an absence of genuine engagement on major projects or legislation that directly affect them."

"This legislation sets up the Suburban Rail Loop Authority with enormous powers - without the accompanying checks and balances that would be warranted for such a major project - and in all good faith we could not support it."

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