

The Heritage Rail Gazette

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\$100,000 WILL GET THE BALL ROLLING

Heritage rail operators are set to receive a total of \$100,000 from the newly re-elected Hodgman Liberal Government. The funds are earmarked to assist in achieving compliance with rail safety requirements and for the reinstatement of rail/road crossing equipment on a part of the Hobart suburban line.

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The Tasmanian Transport Museum Society (TTMS) will be granted access to 5km of the disused line between its headquarters at Glenorchy and Chigwell. A possible future extension is subject to the project meeting with success. The Derwent Valley Railway will be allowed to commence repair work on a part of the line adjacent to their New Norfolk yard and the Don River Railway is set to have its connection to the TasRail main line at Coles Beach reinstated.

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These works are in preparation of the planned 'Rail Weekend', an event that would see the return of heritage excursion trains to Tasmania's main lines after a twelve year hiatus. The operational TasRail network is currently off limits to third party operators. A date for this annual event is yet to be announced.

HOBART ON TRACK FOR PASSENGER RAIL

Ever since the closure of Hobart's suburban line in July 2014, there have been moves to run tourist & heritage rail services on certain sections, as

well as to develop it into a commuter light rail system to ease chronic traffic congestion.

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The recent Hobart City Deal, in conjunction with the Strategic Infrastructure Corridors Act have paved the way towards this end, starting with the TTMS being given access to the line. "The heritage passenger rail experience will not preclude any future light rail operation on the corridor. The TTMS operations would be conducted under a lease agreement facilitated by the Act, which contains a number of provisions to enable the corridor to be reserved for future strategic uses." former Infrastructure Minister Rene Hidding has said.

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Meanwhile, the Hobart Tram Restoration and Museum Society (H-TRAMS) has been working with the Hobart City Council to develop a proposal to operate some of the city's restored historic trams on a section between the Regatta Grounds and Cornelian Bay. This scenic route skirts the River Derwent foreshore and passes by the picturesque Botanical Gardens. A new facility parallel to the line, to showcase and maintain the trams is included in the proposal. H-TRAMS Vice President John Kelly told the Hobart Mercury "Tourists would love this. The business case is solid because the initial capital cost would be modest as many of the main ingredients are ready to go". The City Council has engaged an independent consultancy to assess the business case.

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The Hobart Northern Suburbs Rail Action Group, proponents of a light rail service between Hobart and Brighton, are in favour of the line being used for tourist & heritage rail

services, but not everything is working out as planned.

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The Macquarie Point Development Corporation was in the spotlight late last year in connection with its re-development of the former Hobart railway yards. Despite public commitments to retain railway tracks for future use, a significant section of track was ripped-up and sold off as scrap. Minister Hidding told Parliament at the time that the track was still in place, when this was not the case.

L&NER CONTINUE WORK ON DP14 RESTORATION

Volunteers of the Launceston & North East Railway group are continuing their work on restoring railcar DP14. The former TGR vehicle and a matching trailer were purchased from Burnie City Council last year. The railcar was transported by road to a property at Karoola in September 2017 and placed on a 40m piece of track specially built for the purpose.

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Preliminary work has included a thorough clean up and an assessment of the railcar's condition. Worn out wheels are due to be replaced once the body is lifted off and the bogies removed. Auxillary buildings to serve as a workshop space have been erected nearby.

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The Liberals' Tourist & Heritage Rail policy notes that the L&NER's business case for their proposal to reinstate passenger services between Launceston and the North East has a solid base. However, it and the competing rail trail (cycling) project are currently undergoing thorough examination by Treasury.