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PATRON: The Hon Margaret Reid AO

Mr M Gentleman MLA
Minister for the Environment and Heritage
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SAVE THE TRAINS

Dear Minister

We seek your urgent intervention in the imminent auction of railway rolling stock and other equipment belonging to the Australian Railway Historical Society (ACT Division).

Canberra and the Capital Region must not and cannot lose this important collection of historic railway engines, carriages and other significant items. The trains are important moveable heritage items and the railway has played an important part in our local history. The railhead reached Goulburn in 1869, Queanbeyan in 1887 and Canberra on 25 May 1914 (using the collection's Loco 1210). The railway continues to provide important social, economic as well as cultural benefits.

We are very concerned that the auction planned for 2 August 2017 will likely see the assets lost either interstate or overseas. This would be a disaster for Canberra and the Capital Region.

Yesterday we met with Mr Ian Oliver, Capital Holdings Group, and discussed his proposed rescue plan. Mr Oliver is a successful businessman who we believe is a person of sound character. He demonstrates a good knowledge of local heritage and is genuine in his desire to provide philanthropic assistance for the benefit of the community. This doesn't happen often in Canberra and must be encouraged. Mr Oliver is prepared to commit significant funds and has a shared commitment to a feasibility study aimed at the development of a sustainable business model, which embraces both heritage and regional tourism. We don't think this public spirited offer should be denied.

We also believe that, as a result of the recent publicity, there might be other local publicly spirited organisations and/or individuals who may now also wish to provide

additional assistance to the rescue. Accordingly we are of the view that the liquidator should be requested to defer the auction to enable the acceptance of the offer that has now been made. This should be done in a collaborative manner with Mr Oliver and the other local parties to save the assets without the goal posts being changed as the negotiations are progressed or the cost being "jacked up" through a bidding process. Once the assets have been secured, the focus should then be turned to structuring a new organisation and developing a viable business model.

In this regard we also discussed with Mr Oliver the merits of undertaking a preliminary Strategic Value Management Study. This analytical process would identify and secure the commitment of stakeholders to outcomes through structured participation. Mr Oliver agrees it would be the best way to achieve maximum value for money for both the Government and the community. The study would include ACT and NSW Governments as well as the surrounding local government councils and the community. All have a vested interest and the railway can be used as part of a tourist program that includes Canberra as well as the surrounding cities and towns. They would also provide useful knowledge and other resources. This approach works successfully overseas so why not here?

Under the circumstance we strongly recommend the auction be deferred until after the above studies have been completed and a sustainable business model is developed. At that stage any assets that are not required or couldn't be used as spare parts should be sold.

I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this very important issue.

Yours sincerely



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