



Submission to Infrastructure SA: 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy

GENERAL

The Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society (PRRPS) is a rail based, tourism, not for profit organisation providing rail experiences between Quorn and Port Augusta.

The Society started operation in 1974 from Quorn and extended to Pt Augusta in 2001.

It has expanded its product range and length and is now 39 kilometres long and offering some 5 distinct products delivered by in excess of 69 train services per annum.

The workshop facilities and main operations base are at Quorn.

The customer base comprises intrastate, interstate and international visitors. Most of the customers have planned holidays around trips on one of rail services. As rail experiences are roughly ½ day in length, patrons of PRRPS's services generally spend visitor nights at Quorn, Pt Augusta or close by.

The PRRPS operates over the original Ghan railway line and given the Ghan's history, interest and media exposure the term "Ghan" has strong brand recognition.

The majority of customers have deliberately planned to visit the railway with a lesser number making a spur of the moment decision should they see a train in the Station.

The society recognises the need to grow and along that line has appointed a Business Development Manager. The job is to specifically increase patronage but operating in a 2+ year time frame. A large proportion of bookings are made up to one year in advance which suggests pre-planning at some time before that.

New products are in the planning stage including those which will enable us to operate in fire ban periods.

*Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society Inc
Railway Station
Railway Terrace
QUORN SA 5433*

ABN 24 530 998 354

THE FUTURE

The fortunes of both Quorn township and the PRRPS are closely linked. The town derives considerable revenue from

- Visitors that come to travel on the train services
- PRRPS volunteers.

All services rely on volunteer labour and as the PRRPS runs 69 services per annum (not including specials) there is considerable volunteer labour (most of which comes from Adelaide) needed to cover, train cleaning, car captains, drivers, fireman, guards, track workers, fitters etc. These people spend money in the café's, hotels and supermarket at Quorn which helps sustain local employment.

There are a number of projects that the PRRPS would like to see undertaken and would be likely to bring in extra room nights for Quorn, Pt Augusta and surrounds.

PPRS will also be developing products that expands patronage travelling from Pt Augusta to Quorn. This is seen as a key market for us.

In addition, PPRS derives some benefit from mass events held at Quorn (eg Western Music Festival) and would like to see more of these types of events held in the township or nearby. A couple of potential examples are given below.

From an interstate and international perspective, the PRRPS has a number of competitive advantages over other organisations in the same industry viz:

- Closely associated with a global knowledge re The Ghan train including owning and running locos and original carriages that made up the earliest Ghan services.
- 5 working steam engines with several others in various stages of rebuild
- Situated close to the gateway location of Pt Augusta for East-West and North-South tourism
- Situated on the main road for travellers into the Flinders ranges

Whilst these are strong positions the PRRPS is developing products and services which will lead to new customer markets or expansion of existing markets. Some of these will require grant money as it is currently beyond the organisation's ability to self-fund these projects.

In addition, we would like to see the township of Quorn developed as the natural gateway to the Flinders Ranges with a vibrant cultural atmosphere which brings in other markets not necessarily travelling through to the Flinders Ranges.

Some of the following have been costed as they are issues which have been extant for a number of years.

- **All weather cycle route from Quorn to Pt Augusta**

Constructing an all-weather, separated cycleway between Pt Augusta and Quorn away from the existing road will enable the local councils to promote this option for visitors. It could also be used as the focus of a cycle race. As the distance is considerable it should lead to increased room nights in the area and also encourage cyclists as tourists to use the facility which currently doesn't exist. Cyclists as tourists would be a new market. Whilst the area is hot in summer it has a winter weather which is quite amenable to cycling.

- **All weather cycle route from Wilmington to Quorn**

Constructing an all-weather cycleway between Quorn and Wilmington and joining it to the existing cycleway from Melrose will encourage cyclists to come through to Quorn. This will generate more room nights and greater tourist numbers in Quorn. As above, a Race event could be built around the facility.

- **Rebuild the rail line from Quorn to Bruce (the line of the original Transcontinental Railway)**

When the rail freight service was withdrawn in the 1980's the line between Quorn and Bruce was left in situ but over the years it has deteriorated and an amount of work will be required to restore it for use.

However, by providing a new product where customers will ride in "speeders" the standard of rebuild can be much less expensive than that of a standard railway line. This new product will bring a new type of customer to PRRPS services and should lead to an overall increase in visitor numbers and room nights. In addition, as it does not rely on steam engines it can be offered throughout the year including fire ban periods.

- **Refurbish / repair the Goods Shed and Convert to a Museum – Est cost \$378,000 (in 2014)**

The existing timber framed galvanised iron clad round roofed goods shed is one of very few narrow-gauge examples to survive in 2019. Once common around South Australia it is now thought that only four exist with one very close to collapse.

Refurbishing / repairing the Goods Shed will not only stabilise the building and preserve something that is becoming increasingly rare but enable us to repurpose it as a museum. We have many items that are currently hidden from view as we lack a proper museum building to show these items.

- **Refurbish / repair the SAR Locomotive Shed and Convert to a Museum – Est cost \$482,000 (in 2014)**

This building was originally built by the South Australian Railways as a locomotive shed in 1880 or thereabouts and is believed to be the only one remaining in South Australia. It is suffering from considerable damage and wastage to the timber frame at ground level.

Refurbishing / repairing the Locoshed will allow us to show off rollingstock some of which was built before 1900 and others built pre-WW1. Whilst Steamtown Peterborough is also a rail museum its collection is very much different from that of the PRRPS. On that basis the two institutions are not competitors but could be seen as complimenting one another.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The PRRPS believes that the Pt-Augusta-Quorn – Mid North area has greater tourism potential especially if complimentary businesses can be developed and marketed. Some infrastructure (eg cycle ways) will be beneficial for many tourism businesses in the area.

SUMMARY

The wider area would benefit greatly by the development of complementary businesses and/or experiences. A larger tourism industry will require more staff and which should lead to more local finding local employment.

The Pichi Richi Railway provides a unique experience with international and intrastate standing and would benefit from the goods shed and locoshed being rebuilt.

With help the PRRPS would aim to establish itself as a category killer and the pre-eminent reason for travel to the area, “A must do” experience.

P.P. Geoff Moore
Business Development Manager,
Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society
Ph [DELETED]

Julian Hipwell
President
Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society
Railway Station
Railway Terrace
Quorn 5433