

BAROSSA COUNCIL PUSHING FOR DRIVERLESS BUSES FROM TANUNDA TO NURIOOTPA



Barossa Council Mayor Bim Lange confirmed (on March 14) his Council is actively pursuing the option of bitumenising over the Barossa rail line from Tanunda to Nuriootpa so that driverless buses can scuttle back and forth between the two towns.

The scheme was first proposed by the Council when Anti-Rural-Rail Transport Minister (and local Barossa MP) Stephan Knoll sought Expressions of Interest for the Barossa rail corridor in September last year.

That 4-week EOI period barely gave likely proponents the ability to submit anything other than 'sketches on the back of napkins' proposals, with EOI experts saying that the minuscule window-of-opportunity was deliberate, allowing the anti-rural-rail Marshall Govt to say ... "Well, we made the offer, but nothing tendered was suitable...."

It was not surprising then that all EOI submissions were rejected....well, except for the Council's submission...?

And, surprise, surprise! Anti-rural-rail Knoll, who has publicly expressed his support for 'toy buses', saw, in the submission by the Barossa Council, its interest in driverless buses! Was that a 'seed' that was planted...or was it an original thought by Council...? We will likely never know.....

Perhaps with the thought he could kill two birds with one stone, Knoll announced the Govt would continue discussions with the Council about its submission, knowing it could potentially solve the other pain in its backside -- the Barossa Train Corridor - and any hope of resurrecting or revitalising the Corridor for its historical purpose - THE RUNNING OF TRAINS!

But are driverless buses working well elsewhere? Trials of the concept have been run in SA, notably, with the Munno Para Council, the Holdfast Bay Council, in and around the Flinders University, and in Renmark. SARRA contacted the Councils and the Flinders Uni - and ALL trials (perhaps with the exception of the Flinders Unit - and a serious 'hiccup' with the Renmark service, see more below) HAVE STOPPED.

SARRA is seeking written results of the trials and we will report more in the next week or so, presuming the results can be made publicly available -- we're betting they won't, because from what we've been told unofficially, the concept is crap.

As to the Flinders Uni trial, their public relations officer thought the service was still running - and was surprised when we told her that the 'interactive map' on the Uni's website (which is there specifically to tell people where the bus is on its travels) showed, as of Friday March 13) that the bus was in Clovelly Park -- at 0851hrs on NOVEMBER 19, 2019 !!!! So...is the service still running....? We're still waiting for the bus..... As to the Renmark service, the Renmark Paringa Council receptionist told us the service was still operating...."..but it has been closed for the past week or so, due to SAFETY ISSUES...(!!)"

This was brought to Mayor Lange's attention in our interview..... he says he was aware of all this...but the Barossa driverless buses would be different, because they would be operating on an exclusive right-of-way - THE RAIL CORRIDOR - and thus could run faster! This, as you will hear in the interview, will, according to the Mayor ..."allow the driverless buses to run at 60 KPH..." We don't know about you folks, but we here at SARRA would NEVER travel in ANY trackless vehicle at 60 KPH - WITHOUT A DRIVER!

Further Mayor Lange said the driverless buses would help the elderly get around. Sorry, Bim, the Barossa's elderly are smarter than the average 'drop bear'....if Council thinks the elderly will travel in driverless buses - AND at 60 KPH ---- tell 'em they're dreamin' !!!