

# **SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PLACEMENT AND OPERATION OF A CABLE CAR UP TO THE TOP OF MOUNT ROLAND**

By Brian Inder

## **ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE**

Kentish is not a wealthy community. Lack of funds inhibits progress in many areas in the provision of infrastructure and equipment to sustain community benefit.

To maintain what there is results in an excessive burden on ratepayers to the point where some are now gathering in a good old fashioned revolt and very much in an 'off with their heads' frame of mind.

The continued success of our tourist effort in Sheffield drives the need for extra parking. Council policy of charging new businesses for parking space only ensures that forward business endeavour is firmly chocked on all four wheels. Council is between a rock and a hard place on this point alone.

A further consideration should be addressed. Can our mural economy be relied on to sustain us into the future? Is this all we need?

Recent local events suggest that it is not.

The imposition of draconian planning rules by the State Government will render the mural effort dead in the water. Council efforts to wriggle out from beneath this oppression may or may not prove effective.

In addition, one must survey the current and unfolding situation in the North West region of which we are part.

Note the demise of our vegetable processing and production industries. Forestry and related manufacturers are going to the wall. The stranglehold by international interest is determined to take more than the lion's share thus ensuring our dairy farmers will not prosper. Ditto for the spud and apple growers.

The lack of support for our region by the Hobart-centric Tourism Tasmania has been a long time scandal.

Is the poppy industry, like for the Taliban, to be our only means of support?

The future that confronts us for our region is one of unemployment and a depressed economy, indicating that Centrelink will be our major employer, if it isn't already.

This all adds up to a massive depletion of disposable income and this is what sustains a tourist industry. It certainly does for Kentish.

The totally sad part is that this could have been avoided.

Thirty years ago there were people of vision who foresaw all this and attempted to head off the disaster they could see coming.

They obtained funding from the Federal Government to establish a growers vegetable processing plant to give farmers a direct say in the market place. Rejected by the non-visionaries.

They tried to get the dairy farmers involved in marketing the new products now commonplace and use their ownership of the industry to secure their future. Rejected by the non-visionaries.

They worked valiantly for the establishment of a sugar beet industry. They were put down by vested interests who were able to get the non-visionaries to reject its establishment. We not only lost a sugar industry on the North West Coast, but a fuel industry based on ethanol that a future Prime Minister's brother happily embraced. We now buy his fuel.

We have allowed the manufacture of wood pulp and paint products to slip away.

As it has been so truly said – where there is no vision, the people perish.

Welcome, dear people, to hell.

So let's get back to us – in Kentish. While we are a diverse community, we are not a divided community. We can close ranks in an instant to defend ourselves. And this is what we must do if we are to survive the fiscal tsunami that approaches.

When one surveys the tourism effort in many countries, especially the Middle East, you find that they are backed by a ready source of easy funds, eg oil wells. Kentish does not have an oil well. We do have opium poppies, and if we could market them the same way as the Taliban does, we would be set.

Other places are backed by a 'Big Daddy Warbucks', eg a wealthy community of high flyers (eagles) who contribute generously to their common wealth, eg Carmel, California where even the park clock is made by Rolex. And the visitors flock in jealous admiration of a quality tourist town.

But we do have something that can be as good as all of the above. Something that can sustain us all into the future, provide an easy source of funds to provide for all the goodies on our wish list, protect us from the fallout of a depressed North West economy, and guarantee that we too will have visitors flock in jealous admiration of a quality tourist town.

A cable car from the base of Mount Roland to a viewing area at the top – there is no doubt that it will be a successful tourist attraction.

An engineering firm has already looked at it and declared it would be in the top ten of all the cable car enterprises in the world, and that nowhere is there a cable car that is not viable. It could be constructed for 25 million with their funds.

They have declared that cable car trips are not overly price sensitive so that a commission of \$1-\$2 per passenger paid to Council by some mechanism would be entirely feasible.

This money could easily amount to one million dollars per annum in the future. Not a bad little earner.

I have heard that a cable car would be a 'Mickey Mouse' venture. There is nothing Mickey Mouse about a million dollars income or a cable car ride for that matter. All have a small element of terror in them which is precisely what attracts customers.

I am well aware that there would be a great opposition to the proposal, every bit as great as the Daintree cable car proposal in its day. The Daintree cable car has gone on to be an overwhelming success, silencing all critics. I expect the same outcome here.

I will endeavour to list the objections I could expect to hear, and my answers to them.

#### ➤ **Visual Pollution**

There would be none. And even if there were, it would be only a fraction of the visual pollution we

already have with the triple row of hydro towers and others that dissect our beautiful countryside. Not to mention the hydro, survey and communication structures that are already on the mountaintops.

The cables would carry two cars, one up, one down, each no bigger than a light truck, grey in colour to match the rock face. They would be very difficult to see from Claude Road, impossible to see from Staverton Road and in any case would not face toward Sheffield township. Infrastructure necessary at the top lookout viewing platform could be easily disguised as a rock formation.

#### ➤ **Spiritual Presence and Identity**

I am already very much aware of this as my publication, the Visitor Gazette, will testify.

I have often sat in the presence of 'White Witches' as they describe the spiritual halo that they can see emanating from and surrounding the mountain. They describe the mood of the spirit on that day, if it is angry or benign. On my questioning them, they do not see that the spirit sees itself as some sacred, not to be blasphemed type of spirit and would accept the cable car they believe.

Another group of animists describe Mount Roland as our mother, and we are her children, gathered around her skirts. A pleasant concept and one easy to accept.

My answer to that is, is it not every mother's wish and drive to provide for her children and see them secure? With the cable car income she would be well able to do that.

#### ➤ **Exclusive Use by Athletes, Bushwalkers and Rock Climbers**

Statements made to me, by them, make it quite clear that Mount Roland should be for the exclusive use of the physically agile and no provision should be made for the less capable in any form.

The lack of generosity of spirit in these statements astound me. The pursuit of them would guarantee, in retaliation, a demand for wheelchair access. The only practical way to achieve this would be by cable car.

A way out statement? Consider. A major reason for the new Council chambers was to satisfy the legal requirements for wheelchairs.

A Machiavellian weapon in the hands of the pro-cable car faction indeed. Beware.

#### ➤ **I Don't Want a Cable Car and Can't See the Point of it. I Can't Give You a Real Reason.**

As I hope I have shown previously, benefits to the town of a cable car would be considerable and would thrust an economic reinforcing rod through the entire fabric of our little community enabling us to better withstand that which is surely coming upon us. Better able as they say to withstand 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'. I have already quoted 'where there is no vision the people perish'.

It was certainly vision that saved this community from 'doing a perish' back in 1985. It will require ongoing vision to maintain our position into the future. 'The price of freedom is eternal vigilance'.

However, I must accept that a fair proportion of the population lack vision and are content to mooch along with the status quo.

Just the same, I put to these people this – throughout history, to the present day, it has always been an accepted duty of the elders, those in charge of the affairs of their community to pass onto the next generation the means to live a life.

In the beginning it was teaching the young to hunt and fish, provide shelter. As the centuries unfolded we arrive at the vast education system, trade schools and the provision of capital infrastructure for the common use and benefit as the cable car would be.

We all stand tall on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.

So I charge the 'what's the point' people to accept the responsibility shouldered by so many who have gone before us. Take your place with them.

It is an honourable place to be.

## **COMMENT BY A MERCHANT BANKER ON THE PROPOSAL**

"These people are big and ugly. They have built cable cars all over the world. They see its potential and are prepared to invest \$25,000,000 with no downside to the community and the only obstacle they can see is dealing with an uncooperative Council."