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*Cooma and Monaro Progress Association works to promote the economic  
development and social wellbeing of the region*

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **For immediate release**

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### **Major study confirms feasibility of Canberra to Eden Railway**

Cooma and Monaro Progress Association (CMPA) welcomes results of the Transport for New South Wales Summary of the Feasibility Study into the proposed railway between Canberra and Eden. The report confirms the engineering feasibility of the railway, and validates its ability to help Australia meet the projected doubling of its freight task by 2036.

- The three routes published by CMPA in 2018 in the forerunner Concept Plan for Canberra to Eden Railway by Edwin Michell were each found to be feasible, in addition to two newly identified routes;
- Regular passenger rail services would be returned between Canberra and the Monaro;
- The Port of Eden was confirmed to have ample scope to meet future capacity upgrades;
- However, the cost of the link from Queanbeyan to Canberra Airport was found to be excessive in relation to its benefits.

While the Study Summary restricted freight from inland of the Canberra region, the actual economic market catchment would extend to the Riverina and Central-West of New South Wales which would result in far higher volumes than in the Study. Further, the likely public cost could be reduced by arrangements for public-private partnership and for land sales for affordable housing.

**Railway Cost.** The stated cost of the option chosen by the Feasibility Study is \$6.3 b. The Concept Plan estimate for the railway, of length 312 kilometres, is \$2.95 b. These costs are now compared with the project for Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail: \$11 b estimated in 2018 for 1700 kilometres including 600 kilometres of new alignment. Inland Rail includes a new descent of the Great Divide at Toowoomba, comparable with the descent in the Concept Plan from the Monaro to Eden Port. The Feasibility study estimate appears incompatible with the estimates for Inland Rail and the Concept Plan, which two are roughly compatible with each other.

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Nelson Wallace, Business Consultant  
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**Freight Catchment Area.** CMPA were repeatedly informed: for freight from the inland, the railway does not fit in with existing plans of Transport for NSW and of their country rail agent. However, the decision to undertake the Feasibility Study can naturally result in fresh options for that freight. The new railway and the Port of Eden can cooperate in competing with the alternative more congested ports and their approaches.

**Benefit/Cost Ratios.** The financially disabling benefit/cost ratios in the Feasibility Study were the results of restricting financial support of freight from the inland, and of using unnecessarily high construction estimates. Both the Financial and the Socio-Economic Cost/Benefit analyses in the Concept Plan demonstrate enabling benefit/cost ratios.

CMPA's **preferred route** remains the Towamba Valley option, as proposed in the 2018 Concept Plan by Edwin Michell. The route into Canberra could alternatively diverge earlier from the existing line to the south to reach the existing Kingston terminus via a new ACT freight terminal at Fyshwick. These modifications coupled with removal of the separate-business costs at Eden Port would cut more than \$2 b from the Study cost, bringing the estimate in line with the Concept Plan projection. The preferred route would deliver by far the lowest cost and shortest route, while the impact on protected areas would be contained.

The Feasibility Summary report, released in September 2020, is available at: [transport.nsw.gov.au](http://transport.nsw.gov.au) – Projects – Programs – Fixing Country Rail – scroll down. The Concept Plan is available at: [coomansw.com.au](http://coomansw.com.au) – Articles and Projects – scroll down.

The Canberra to Eden Railway would relieve two of Canberra's pressing social problems, by delivering affordable housing, and reducing dependence on automobile commuting.

CMPA has seen reason for the Concept Plan to be continued except for a deviation, which should be conveniently achieved, to preserve an ancient heritage site in bushland. The engineering feasibility of the railway having been confirmed, a separate assessment of the Concept Plan is now a worthy option.