



October 18, 2015

The Barossa Wine Train - not a 'Biggy' for the State

It's official - the South Australian Government clearly doesn't give a toss about the Barossa Wine Train.

It doesn't know what's happening with it - nor will it at the very least investigate whether the Wine Train is leaving the State.

And that's from the mouth of the Minister for Tourism, **Leon Bignell** - interviewed by us at the Community Cabinet public forum in Nuriootpa on Sunday 18 October.



Despite the State Government's bleating that it has spent \$8million on promoting the Barossa, its representative in Cabinet, the Tourism Minister, is not the least bit interested in finding out the current status of the Barossa Wine Train.

We put the question to the Minister in the light of continuing and persistent rumours to us that the Barossa Wine Train is to be lost to South Australia (see our original story on our website).

Since our first story, we have had further information that the three Barossa Wine Train carriages (Bluebird Class) are to be moved to Goulburn in New South Wales, made suitable to run on what is known as the Defined Interstate Rail Network (DIRN) under the control of ESPEE Railroad Services, a wholly owned business of the Australian Railway Historical Society. ESPEE is not just a 'warm'n'fuzzy' arm of the Historical Society - it's a business providing a range of services to rail operators, including crew hire, accredited operations, engineering, project management and compliance.

The word we have is that while the Barossa Wine Train carriages may be used for tourist services in NSW, the likelihood is that they will be reconfigured as crew-quarters for maintenance gangs working the train lines in NSW.



Now to be fair to Minister Bignell, he doesn't know whether this is happening or not - and we admit that we questioned him on the basis of rumours - *but very firm rumours* - we are hearing.

We also admit that we have made many attempts to contact the man who owns the Barossa Wine Train, John Geber, of Chateau Tanunda - and another of the shareholders of the train known to us. *Neither have bothered to respond, despite repeated attempts by us.* We can only assume that by their silence there is veracity in the rumours we are hearing, from highly-accredited sources.

We can only assume, in the lack of further information, that the Barossa Wine Train is lost to the Valley.



While the State Government, with its worthy Community Cabinet initiative, is keen to talk up the need for the Barossa to play its part in creating employment for SA, it seems that it is totally uninterested *in even looking at* what is happening to the Wine Train, and how it might realise and help in any way the potential of a tourist train which would provide a sustainable and unique tourist development for the Valley.

As we have said before, writhing in the dirt and rolling eggs on a table is one thing - providing, encouraging or otherwise fostering real, on-the-ground, attractive and sustainable tourist ventures which might provide employment is another.

Minister Bignell's response to even look into what is happening to the Wine Train can be summed up, on the basis of our interview with him, in a few words: uninterested, unmoved and unresponsive.

See what you think by checking out our interview with him [on our website](#).