



Social Justice Commission

Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba

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Bishop Morris Pleads for Continuing Rail Services to the West

Bishop Morris from the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba has voiced great concerns over cuts to rail freight to centres in South Western Queensland. “People rely on rail freight in centres such as Cunnamulla or Quilpie and when these services are interrupted or limited they can hurt some of our region’s most vulnerable people,” stated Bishop Morris. In 2007, the “Dropping Off the Edge” study into the distribution of disadvantage in Australia identified the Cunnamulla district as one of the highest ranking areas of disadvantage in Queensland. “Any cuts to a regular rail freight service will add to the hardship for this group of people,” stated Bishop Morris.

If rail services are not available and road transport is used, the cost of food will rise affecting people from a lower socio economic background. In 2001 the Catholic Bishops’ of Australia published a Social Justice Sunday Statement on rural and regional Australia, *A Just and Peaceful Land*.

This statement highlighted the social dimension of withdrawing services and the effect that it has on community spirit.

Withdrawal of services tells people that the service or government has lost confidence in a community, so the community loses confidence in itself.

In this same statement the Australian Bishops emphasised that decisions made about the future of services such as rail freight should be influenced by social considerations, not purely economic ones. “I sincerely hope that cuts to rail freight to the Western parts of our Diocese are temporary and that this does not signal the beginning of the end. Our Church’s Teachings hold that there is a service obligation on civil authorities such as the state government. We need to ensure that smaller more isolated communities are not hurt as part of cost cutting measures.”

For more information contact Bishop William Morris on 46324277
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“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel.” **Justice in the World: Synod of Bishops, 1971**