

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. EI of 2000 Legislative Council

The petitioners ask the House:

That the Devil Cat service based at George Town is critical to the trading performance of Northern and North Eastern businesses and to local employments, and that:

1. future summer services of a Devil Cat service be based at George Town;
2. any government assistance given to a private operator of a fast ferry service across Bass Strait be conditional upon the service being based at George Town.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

- Ferry services are an integral part of Tasmania's interstate transport network and it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that these services are delivered in a cost effective manner that will maximise the benefit to the State while minimising costs and any potential risks.
- Establishment and continued operation of ferry services requires considerable capital investment with the terminal and facilities at George Town costing \$2 million to replace today. This provides George Town with a considerable competitive edge regarding the provision of future services.
- I am pleased to advise that discussions to secure a vessel for the 1999-2000 summer season are occurring. While these discussions are being undertaken it is inappropriate for the Government to give a firm commitment to next summer's catamaran service. Such a commitment, in the absence of information regarding vessel configuration, possible modifications for Bass Strait operation and the likely costs, would jeopardise the negotiating position of TT-Line with respect to securing the best possible outcome for prospective passengers and the industries and regions that benefit from their travel.

- The development of a fast ferry service across Bass Strait by private operators should be undertaken on a commercial basis and without any government assistance, which consequently precludes any conditions being applied.

Minister's Name

Portfolio

Date: