

THE MURRAY VALLEY

Standard

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January 26 debate heats up

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OPINION | P6



Monarto airport vision

Liberals back 24-hour Monarto airport, Hills railway bypass

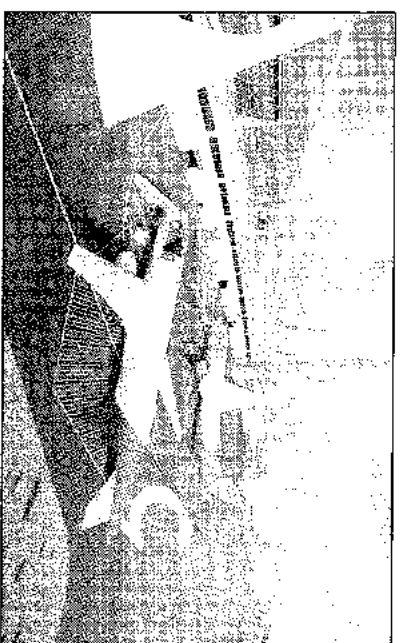
PERI STRATHHEARN
Monarto South

THE Liberals will consider building an airport at Monarto if they win government in 2018, Opposition Leader Steven Marshall has announced.

The Liberals' plan, branded "GlobeLink", calls for include construction of a 24-hour freight transfer facility and airport at Monarto, plus a rail and road bypass running north of the Adelaide Hills and on to Port Adelaide.

The airport would be built south of the Monarto freeway interchange and west of Perrie-McDonald Road.

Directing trucks and trains from there to Port Adelaide via a new route would reduce traffic on the South Eastern



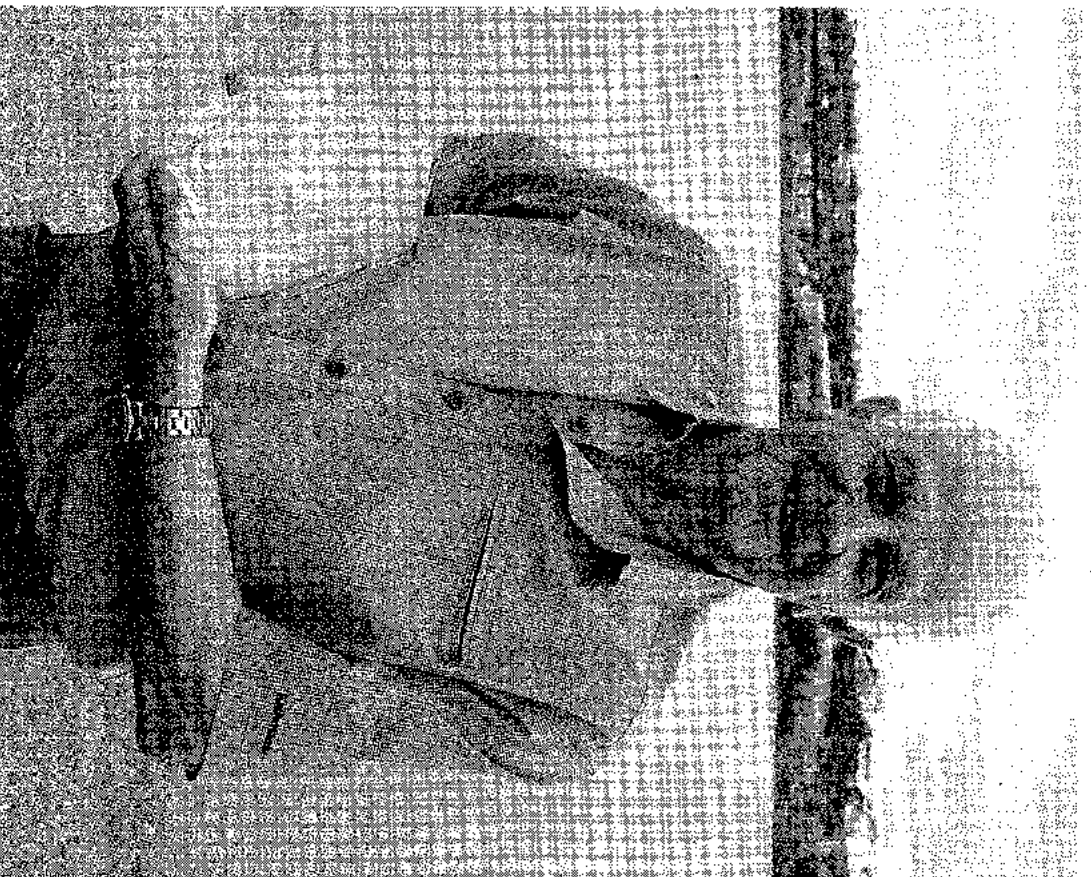
VISION: If elected, the Liberal Party would begin planning a 24-hour freight airport at Monarto. Image: SA Liberals.

Freeway and main roads in Adelaide, as well as reducing noise and the risk of bushfire for Hills residents living near the railway line.

But the number-one argument for such a project, Mr Marshall said, was economic. "A generational upgrade

of our freight export infrastructure is needed to provide our companies with the competitive advantage they need to get our premium South Australian products to markets across the globe," he said.

Continued page 3



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: Retired Murray Bridge businessman Graham Hallandal has become a leading advocate of bushwalking. Photo: Peri Strathearn.

Traiblazing volunteer wins

Retired businessman Graham Hallandal, whose volunteer work helped get a network of local trails up and running, has been named Murray Bridge's citizen of the year at an Australia Day ceremony on the city's riverfront.

Full story: pages 4-5
Photos: pages 7-9

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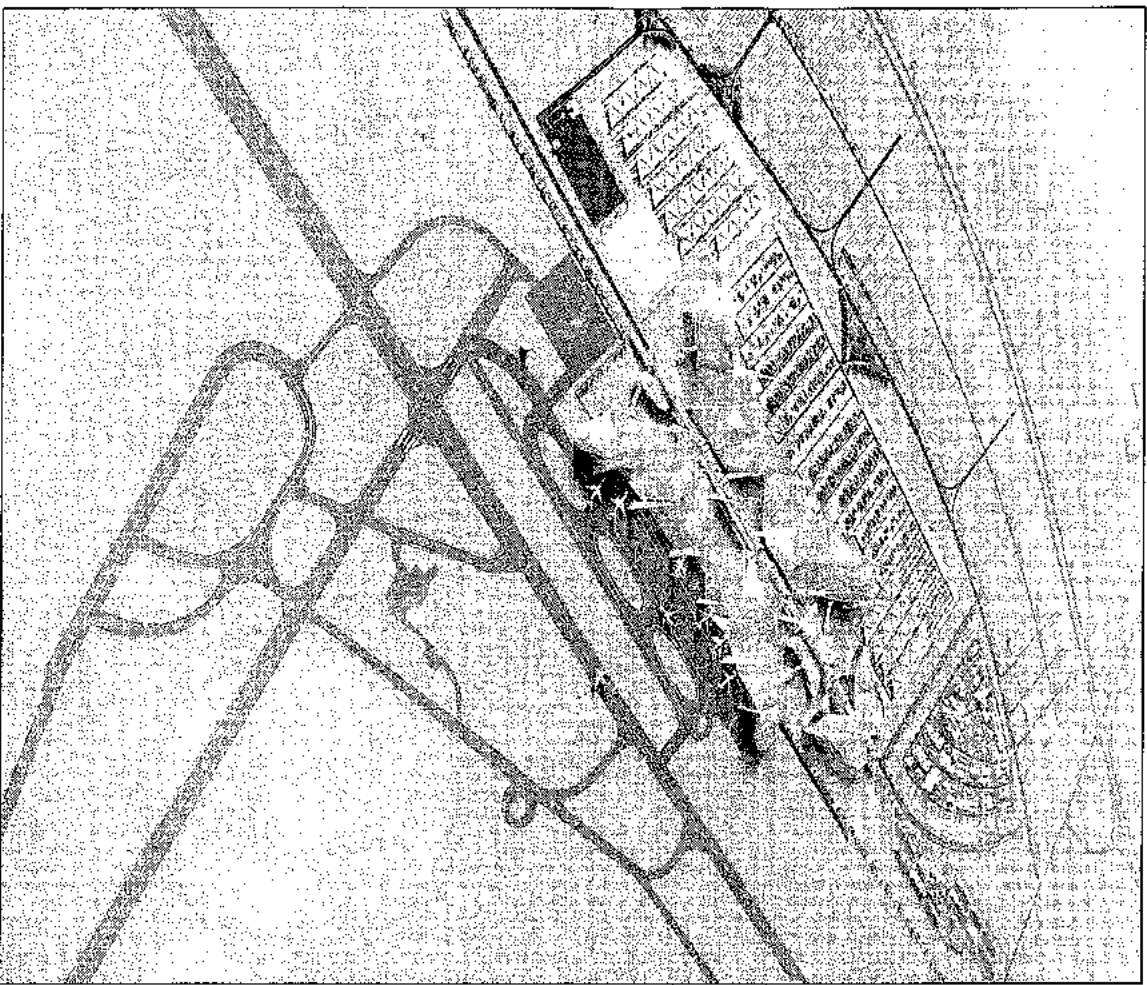
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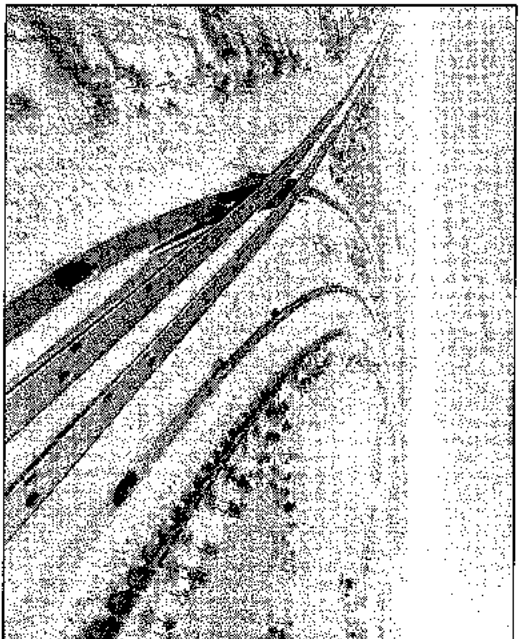


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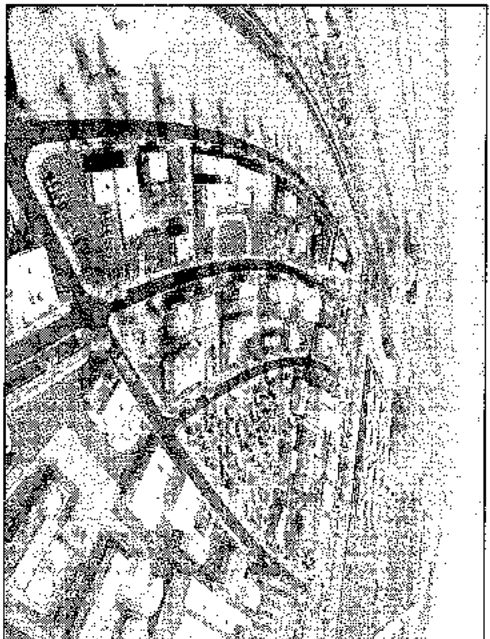
Airport, bypass would be Murraylands' link to the globe



FROM ABOVE: The proposed airport at Monarto would likely feature two runways and close alignment with the freeway and railway line. Images: SA Liberals.



TURN RIGHT HERE: A new bypass would take trucks and trains from Monarto to Truro, then down into Port Adelaide.



INTERMODAL HUB: The proceeds of land sales to logistics companies would help fund the project.

Politics could stop lift-off

BY PERI STRATHFARN
Monarto South

POLITICS may be the biggest impediment to a Monarto airport.

As soon as the Opposition announced the plan, Transport Minister Stephen Mulighan panned it as "pork-barrelling at its worst", saying it was intended only to win votes in the Adelaide Hills.

He pointed to reports by engineering firm GHD and the state government's own

modellers which said there was not enough demand to justify the \$3.6 billion cost of a bypass; and to federal body Infrastructure Australia, which did not list it as a priority.

The day after the announcement, Murray Bridge's Mayor was already pleading for the vision to be prioritised above any point-scoring.

"It will be an absolute shame if this gets hijacked into a political bun-fight," he said.

"It's too important to this council, it's too important to South Australia.

"This is a strategic project that needs to see the fullness of time, to stand on its own merits, regardless of politics.

"As the mayor of the city, I want to see the proposal have a fair and reasonable go at being tested on the grounds of the environment, the economy, socially.

"I believe it will stack up." The airport idea was first suggested in the 1970s alongside Don Dunstan's vision of

a satellite city at Monarto. When that failed, it went onto the back-burner until 2005, when the Murraylands Regional Development Board - under Mr Lewis - commissioned the first of several reports into the idea.

He and Murray Bridge council CEO Michael Sedgeman met with the Liberals to discuss the concept in the middle of last year but did not know an announcement was coming until last week.

A proposed freight transfer terminal at Monarto, some-

times called an intermodal hub, had been the council's main focus in the area.

There was good news on that front, Mr Lewis said: national freight company SCTI Logistics had agreed to operate out of the terminal if it were built, and another operator was in talks with the council.

"I'll put Murray Bridge on the map, long-term it will make us a strategically valuable site in terms of export and start-ups ... (and) it will diversify our economy,"

he said.

"While we have a fantastic platform right now (the food industry), if it wasn't to grow, what would be our future?" "Potentially there's thousands of jobs to come out of this."

Despite the political game-playing, Mr Lewis may take solace in the history of the Gifford Hill racecourse, which was a Liberal priority prior to the last state election but wound up receiving funds from the Labor state government anyway.



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