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Luke Gosling OAM, MP
Chair of Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Gosling

Inaccuracies in ARRB/NTRO evidence before Committee on 9 March 2023

I write in relation to evidence given by Michael Caltabiano, the Chief Executive of ARRB/NTRO on 9 March 2023, to the *Inquiry into the Implications of Severe Weather Events on the National Regional, Rural and Remote Road Network*. There are a number of substantial inaccuracies in the evidence, and I would like to correct some of those.

The relevant section from the transcript is below.

CHAIR: You mentioned the chapters before. We had Austroads giving the evidence in the last session. They said they updated their chapter on hydrology recently or something. Is that based on your information to them?

Mr Caltabiano: Yes, we write most of the Austroads technical reports. They publish—they're a publishing house. They receive funding from the states and the Commonwealth and release projects to market. We do most of the technical work and write most of the guides. But they're for state governments. We wrote a suite of guides funded by the Commonwealth, actually, back in 2019. We wrote those guides for local government. We've put a budget bid in this year to write the next suite of four for local government to give them the basis and the confidence to do new things. The first one is on safety and the second one is on recycled pavements in the next suite of guides for local government.

CHAIR: Okay. And they're more directed at state governments?

Mr Caltabiano: These are local government guides. Austroads are focused on state government outcomes.

There are three substantial falsehoods in this section of evidence.

First, in relation to the claim that ARRB/NTRO undertook work to update the hydrology content in Austroads Guide to Road Design, ARRB/NTRO did none of the work related to *Update of Guide to Road Design Part 5: Drainage - General and Hydrology Considerations (Australian Rainfall And Runoff Alignment)* (Project Number: SRD6229). This work was undertaken by WMA Water Pty Ltd (Chris Russell, Mark Babister and Bill Weeks). I understand that WMA Water Pty Ltd have no legal relationship with ARRB/NTRO.

Second, in relation to the claim that ARRB/NITRO undertakes most of the technical work and writes most of the Guides for Austroads, again this is untrue. While the figure will vary in any given year, ARRB/NITRO undertake about one third of Austroads research and guidance work by value. In many areas, such as hydrology, ARRB/NITRO, lack the capability to undertake the work.

Third, to the claim that Austroads are focused on state government and our material is not used by local government. The Australian Local Government Association is an active member of Austroads and local government representatives are active in Austroads forums. Consequently, Austroads Guides have been downloaded by local governments representatives more than 43,000 times between January 2021 and February 2023. That is around 90 downloads every working day by local government staff. Local government staff download at a rate twice that downloaded by people working for State Government agencies.

Austroads Guides appear to be downloaded by local governments at a rate **25 times higher** than the ARRB Local Government Guides (43,000 Austroads v 1,700 ARRB).

Thank you for considering this matter.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Allan
Chief Executive