

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION NO. 169

4 May 2006

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services
Room R1 121
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Attention: Mr Tas Luttrell

Dear Sir

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES: INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRATION OF REGIONAL RAIL AND ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT AND THEIR INTERFACE WITH PORT

Thank-you for the opportunity to appear before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services to give evidence on behalf of the Southern Regional Organisation of Councils (SouthROC) on regional and road freight transport issues affecting the Southern Region of South East Queensland and the adjacent Northern Rivers Region in New South Wales.

A number of issues were highlighted in the evidence presented by representatives of this organisation together with Beaudesert Shire Council and the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils which elected to appear jointly before the Inquiry. SouthROC wishes to reaffirm its commitment to securing the integration of road and rail freight and passenger transportation infrastructure to Pacific Trade Coast and the Port of Brisbane including linkages with regional airports.

This supplementary report seeks to update the submission lodged in May 2005 and focus on the key elements of our submission.

The SouthROC region includes the local government areas of Gold Coast City, Logan City, Redland Shire, and Beaudesert Shire in South East Queensland and Tweed Shire in northern New South Wales. Australia's fastest growing region, SouthROC has a current population of more than 940,000 projected to grow to 1.3 million by 2026.

The SouthROC Region together with the Northern Rivers Region is facing sustained population growth and there is an urgent need to secure an integrated transport network to support economic development and employment opportunities.

The Port of Brisbane is the major port facility for South East Queensland and the Northern Rivers region in New South Wales and is of State and National significance.

The State border is an impediment to integrated planning and roll-out of major transportation infrastructure. SouthROC recognises the importance of collaboration across administrative boundaries to achieve the best planning outcomes for future sustainable regions.

Key elements of an integrated freight transport system

The key elements of an integrated freight transport system for this region include:

- A National interstate highway network comprising:
 - Pacific Highway (M1) linking Northern New South Wales and Gold Coast City to Brisbane City, Port of Brisbane and Australia Trade Coast via an upgraded Gateway Arterial Road and Port of Brisbane Arterial Road; and
 - Mt Lindesay Highway / Summerland Way upgraded connection connecting Coffs Harbour, Grafton, linking with multi-modal road/rail freight hubs at Casino and Bromelton (near Beaudesert) to the proposed Gateway Motorway Extension south of Logan to the Port of Brisbane.
 - Proposed East-West Arterial Freight Corridor linking the M1 at Yatala to the Cunningham and Warrego Highways via Bromelton and Ebenezer/Purga in Ipswich.
- Existing and potential rail corridors including:
 - Interstate Standard Gauge Rail Freight Corridor from Brisbane to Sydney connecting through Bromelton and Casino.
 - Existing passenger rail corridor from Brisbane to Robina (Gold Coast). A Queensland State Government commitment to extend the passenger rail service to Gold Coast Airport at Coolangatta is included in the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program (SEQIPP) for 2016-2026.
 - Proposed Brisbane- Melbourne Cunningham Rail Link: Inglewood-Warwick-Rathdowney-Bromelton-Brisbane.

It is understood Beaudesert Shire Council will be directly forwarding further detailed information regarding the Bromelton component of the SouthROC submission as it becomes available and has provided electronic copies of the evidence tabled at the hearing.

The following additional information has been provided by Mr Rod Grose of Gold Coast City Council.

Gold Coast City Council is seeking a commitment of Commonwealth funds to the Pacific Motorway Upgrade between Nerang and Stewart Road (where the Tugun Bypass begins). This is currently a four lane Motorway, under daily traffic pressure from increasing traffic volumes. GCCC modelling predicts that between 2003 and 2011, the traffic flows on the Motorway will increase as follows -

At Neilsens Road (Nerang) - up from 75,000 to 86,000 vehicles per day (24 hours)

At Reedy Creek - up from 55,000 to 91,000 vpd

At Stewart Road - up from 45,000 to 85,000 vpd

Tugun Bypass - to carry 73,000 vpd in 2011

These flows will cause extensive daily congestion unless the Motorway can be upgraded to at least a 6-lane standard (3 lanes in each direction) by that time.

2 The Roads to Recovery program has been very helpful to local governments across Australia, but it needs to recognise that the demand for new and improved roads is not caused simply by a combination of the local population, the local area and the length of road within a local government, but is caused chiefly by the growth in population of an area. The

Roads to Recovery Program's distribution of funding needs to take into account as a relevant factor the extraordinary growth pressures facing some local governments (such as GCCC and others in SEQ and elsewhere), so that additional funds can be directed to areas where the pressure of growth is requiring new and improved roads.

The demands on local governments for new infrastructure caused by population growth need to be recognised by the Commonwealth. Gold Coast City is catering for about 25% of all of Queensland's total population growth, supported by a population base of just 0.5million people. Local governments are struggling to fund their local road needs - and those roads are the roads that provide access to employment areas such as the Coomera Marine Precinct, Yatala Industrial Area, major tourist attractions and so on.

3 Whether people move in cars or on public transport, they are still moving about for the same purposes. Just as rail freight eases the burden on the roads, so does improved public transport infrastructure ease the burden on the road system. The Gold Coast Rail Line has been a spectacular success in terms of attracting patronage and reducing the demand for car travel on the Pacific Motorway. However, in peak periods, passengers on the Railway are standing for the entire journey between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, because each train is filled to capacity. The Commonwealth was instrumental in initiating the construction of the Railway in the 1990s, and Commonwealth funds would be of great assistance in getting the line extended further south (including into Northern NSW) and augmented (with double tracks etc) in Queensland. The northern NSW region is heavily reliant on Brisbane, the Gold Coast and SEQ for many of its goods and services needs, yet it has no rail connection into SEQ. The Commonwealth could play a significant role in causing the extension of the railway into NSW, thus improving tourist and other passenger linkages with SEQ.

Despite the views presented by the Northern Rivers ROC about the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line, the economic case for that line may be relatively difficult to establish. The real need is for improvements to the Pacific Highway in NSW to cater for road freight, and a railway extension south from Coolangatta along the coastal strip towards Byron Bay (and not to Murwillumbah). The difference in gauge is not important - it would be a railway line from Byron Bay (or wherever) to SEQ, and not a railway to Sydney. Passengers could easily change trains at Byron Bay or wherever the NSW system ended. The NSW rail system might be pressed to provide two train services each day from Sydney, but the Queensland system could probably sustain an hourly service (or better) south from Coolangatta, because of the significantly greater population in the corridor towards Brisbane.

Because of the different State jurisdictions involved, the Commonwealth could play the leading role in initiating this development. And it needs to be done sooner rather than later, otherwise route options will be lost, and development will fail to capitalise on the potential of the railway to guide the pattern of development.

Within Queensland, the route for the Railway extension is known and protected. Most of the route is in State ownership. The Impact Assessment Study has been completed and there are no major environmental hurdles to overcome. The main thing that is needed for the Railway extension to proceed is the funding.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this further submission, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

Kim Campbell
SOUTHROC COORDINATOR