

Overview

Introduction

- 1.1 Over the years, Australians have used contemporary transport technologies within our borders or outside, to reduce the tyranny of distance, and by doing so, built our national community and the economic prosperity of the nation. It is fair to say that efficient and effective transport systems have been a pillar of Australia's social and economic development. It is also a fair assessment that Australia's continuing capacity to compete in the global market and the capacity of Australian businesses to compete in our domestic market and for us to maintain a national community will require efficient and safe transport systems.
- 1.2 The next stage is the use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) – those transport systems that apply information, communication and other forms of high technology, to the efficient and safe movement of goods and people, across a suburb, across a city, across the continent, or across the globe. Intelligent Transport Systems are a fundamental element of a modern, industrialised economy as the railway and clipper ship were to the development of our economic prosperity in the 19th century, and steam powered vessels and the aeroplane were to our economic development in the century just past.
- 1.3 This report examines specific elements of intelligent transport systems, notes the impressive successes and unfolding potential of ITS, while identifying the major issues that need to be resolved to ensure that our transportation system becomes more intelligent and enables the nation to seize the opportunities of the future.

Inquiry background

- 1.4 On 27 June, 2002, the Hon John Anderson MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services to inquire into the potential to apply variable speed limits to the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra as case studies of the effectiveness of intelligent transport systems (ITS).
- 1.5 The request arose out of a detailed briefing on transport and regional matters that the Minister had given the committee.
- 1.6 Specific terms of reference were not developed for the inquiry. However, in his briefing Minister Anderson indicated that ITS had the potential to play an important part in Australia's continuing economic development. Minister Anderson indicated that the role of ITS would depend upon ongoing innovation and sound policy co-ordinated between jurisdictions. As an example of innovation, Minister Anderson mentioned variable speed limit signs. Minister Anderson also indicated that the Commonwealth, states and territories had developed and pursued a national ITS strategy for a number of years and that a review of the success of this policy and related ones was worthy of examination.

Conduct of inquiry

- 1.7 In the light of the briefing provided by the Minister, the committee decided to conduct an inquiry that examined the contribution that specific technologies could make to the implementation of ITS and the contribution to the implementation of ITS that could be made by the Commonwealth. To do this the committee developed a series of 'inquiry points' that would guide, but not limit, the inquiry. The points are:
 - The potential to apply variable speed limits on the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra as case studies on the effectiveness of intelligent transport systems;
 - The benefits and costs of applying variable speed limits to the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra;
 - Any limitations on applying variable speed limits to the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra;
 - The role of the Commonwealth in fostering the development of intelligent transport systems on other sections of the land transport

systems in Australia, in the light of the experience derived from the development of the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra; and

- Whether the experience derived from the development of the F3 Freeway and the Hume Highway between Sydney and Canberra can be used to identify sections of the land transport systems in Australia that may benefit from intelligent transport systems.

1.8 The committee decided that a focused inquiry, involving industry, as well as research and development peak stakeholders would enable the inquiry to proceed efficiently. Consequently, the committee approached peak organisations, industry bodies and researchers for contributions to the inquiry. Apart from a public hearing, at which the Department of Transport and Regional Services appeared, the committee conducted inspections and briefings with key stakeholders in Sydney and Brisbane and received submissions.

Structure of report

- 1.9 Intelligent transport systems are often little noticed elements in Australia's complex and diverse transport system. ITS is so much a part of the accepted background of Australia's transport infrastructure that many users of transport systems are not aware of the contribution ITS makes to the efficient and economic movement of people, produce and products.
- 1.10 For these reasons, the report begins with a brief review of the nature of ITS and their present contribution to the economy and their potential contribution, not merely in transport efficiencies but also in export income. The report then goes on to examine the major issues that have emerged in this inquiry.