THE **Warren** CENTRE
FOR ADVANCED ENGINEERING

10 May 2005

Mr Tas Luttrell
Principal Research Officer
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Lutteral,

Re: Inquiry into the Integration of Regional Rail and Road Freight Transport and Their Interface with Ports.

I refer to your letter of 5 April 2005 to the Vice Chancellor, University of Sydney inviting a submission on the various matters arising under the terms of reference for the Inquiry, which has been referred to The Warren Centre for response.

This submission is based on The Warren Centre's highly-respected research, the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* (*STinSC*) project, with input from leading professionals who were involved in that project. The submission in this respect is constrained to the component of the National freight transport task related to the urban conurbation surrounding our capital cities.

As expressed in other submissions to the Federal Government, The Warren Centre's position is that the Federal Government should take the leadership role in the area of transport through a National Transport Plan embracing all transport in Australia, including that in the highly populated major cities. We see the current Bills before parliament in relation to the Auslink Transport Program as a first step in moving towards such a plan.

We see the freight transport task as a vital element in the economic development of the Nation but consider it should be seen in this light as an integral component of transport overall and not in isolation. In this broader context today, it should be recognised that the cities are the economic drivers of the Nation.

Specific comments on matters raised in the Terms of Reference are given below.

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The role of Australia's regional road and rail network in the national freight transport task

The regional road and rail network is a critical element of supplying our population centres with product that can be efficiently and economically produced in our regional centres. This is vital for the health of regional economies.

The key issue in developing a regional road and rail freight network is ensuring that supply of product to the end market is effective. This simply means that all links in the delivery chain need to be recognized in prioritizing any specific infrastructure works program.

We see the regional road and rail networks that are being developed to and into the cities and connection to the ports as having a vital role in freight movement. The critical element of the inter-regional movement is however the city end which tends to be dominated by people movement and largely commuter movement.

This is also as true for our intra-regional economies, where the effective movement of goods is equally as important in ensuring the efficient distribution of goods to the point of sale and consumption. With an emphasis having been so dominated by people movement, we have forgotten that a key element of our economy is the actual wares our economy produces and substance of our daily lives.

The Warren Centre has recommended to governments that freight receive a higher focus in transport planning with specifically road space managed to give priority lanes to freight in non-peak periods. See enclosed copy of "Freight: the Forgotten Task".

The relationship and co-ordination between Australia's road and rail networks and their connectivity to ports

We see a lack of co-ordination between Australia' road and rail networks and their connectivity to ports, in our view brought about by the lack of integration between the diverse, large number of government bodies involved. In NSW, we still have separate Ministers for Roads, Public Transport and Ports, each with their own agendas which too frequently are conflicting. However, we have a single Minister responsible for all planning which brings together that vital co-ordination between land use and transport.

A similar but more diverse responsibly exists for planning land use and transport in the federal arena. At least there is a single Minister for Transport but the Department involved still retains separate divisions for each transport mode effectively ensuring a lack of co-ordination between modes.

If freight planning is to adopt the truly multi-modal framework that is the reality of its movement, the present theme of modal policy teams will not create the opportunity to take the necessary holistic perspective. The development of a product policy focus could provide the

necessary impetus to more clearly realise the opportunities for effective reinvestment in transport infrastructure.

Policies and measures required to assist in achieving greater efficiency in the Australian transport network, with particular reference to:

- **Land transport access to ports –** land transport to ports in the greater Sydney Region is reasonably effective by road but poor by rail, resulting in a distorted split favouring road in an area where rail could and should be expected to dominate. At this time the State Government is looking at rail access to and from the port with a view to establishing freight terminals at regional locations throughout the Region. Recent realisation of the importance of freight in balance with commuting is exemplified by the NSW deferral of commuting infrastructure (the M4 East tollway), with concern for freight issues in and around Port Botany.

- **Capacity and operation of ports –** No relevant data on which to base comment

- **Movement of bulk export commodities, such as grain and coal –** no relevant data on which to base comment

- **The role of intermodal freight hubs in regional areas –** The Warren Centre in the STinSC project saw the establishment of modern freight terminals across the Sydney Region as a vital element in establishing an effective sustainable transport system for Greater Sydney. It was intended that these terminals be linked by rail to the ports to optimise rail use in freight movement. This is a critical element in addressing the rail/road balance, and facilitating urban friendly freight operations.

  The benefit of regional intermodal freight hubs relies entirely on the adequate development of freight conduits into the urban area and to the ports.

- **Opportunities to achieve greater efficiency in the use of existing infrastructure –** As previously indicated a key element in enhancing transport in the Sydney Region will be to manage transport space – road and rail – to give greater priority to public transport of people and greater priority to freight. In this respect we saw the creation of a fast rail network for people movement completely independent of the existing heavy rail network as a vital element in the transport plan for Greater Sydney. This would then free up the exiting heavy rail network allowing a higher priority for freight movement.

- **Possible advantages from the use of intelligent tracking technology –** Intelligent transport systems were an essential element of the STinSC project. This is not specifically in relation to vehicle and load security or condition monitoring, all significant freight management issues. In this respect intelligent tracking technology is a vital component in the transport system to optimize loading, to reduce delays at terminals and to minimise time and journey length on the transport network.

Intelligent tracking also could provide opportunities for more effective cost recovery from the freight industry, providing a framework for actively relating infrastructure costs (both road and rail) to freight movement. While this is not a dominant aspect in modal choice (delivery timing and interface costs have higher effect on commercial issues), it is an aspect that clouds both industry and community perceptions of freight activity.

Whether this should be a tracking of all activity or only of movements where operational conditions have been breached is a matter for privacy policy.

We would be pleased to elaborate on any aspects of the comments above.

Yours faithfully

Professor Michael Dureau
Executive Director

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