

Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils

May 5th 2005

Mr Paul Neville MP
Chairman, Committee of Inquiry of Regional Rail and Road Freight Transport and
their interface with Ports.
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Neville

Inquiry into the Integration of Regional Rail and Road Freight Transport and their interface with Ports.

I refer to your correspondence dated April 4th 2005, in which you invited submissions for the above inquiry. WBBROC is currently working with the Queensland State Government in reviewing the Wide Bay 2020 Strategic Plan and also in developing an Inland Strategic Plan for the Wide Bay Burnett region.

Unfortunately, while the integration of regional road and rail networks to serve the ports of Bundaberg, Gladstone and Brisbane is a key strategic issue, our regional strategic planning processes are not at a stage where we can provide a detailed input to your inquiry. However, the following general comments may be of assistance.

1. WBBROC believes that improved road and rail connections with the port of Bundaberg are crucial to growing the region's economy. As world fuel prices continue to soar more cost effective transport strategies utilising an efficient combination of road, rail and shipping networks must be employed if Australia is to maintain competitive exports. In the past there has been a focus on connecting Australia's capital cities with efficient transport corridors however WBBROC believes that with rising fuel costs this focus must be redirected to developing cost efficient and sustainable regional transport strategies supported with Federal infrastructure funding provided directly to the regions.
2. As a result of the above concerns, WBBROC has commenced negotiations with the Queensland State Government to identify a suitable site in the Wide Bay Burnett region for a Regional Transport Interchange to assist the future integration of road, rail, port and airfreight services.

3. The feasibility of developing a new inland railway is currently being investigated as one of the initiatives for improving rail freight services. The opportunity exists for export of bulk coal from the Surat coalfields (soon to be developed) and bulk grain from the western areas of Queensland and New South Wales. WBBROC believes that the ports of Gladstone and Brisbane will be unable to handle this additional freight and that the upgrading of the port of Bundaberg is a viable option. Initial investigations into these proposals have been undertaken but further feasibility studies are required.
4. The port of Bundaberg has the capacity to be upgraded to take some of the pressure off the port of Gladstone. However, an impediment to increasing freight volumes is the lack of direct road and rail access to the port. A heavy transport road/rail corridor ring route around the city of Bundaberg is required as a matter of urgency.
5. Emerging industries in the South Burnett including peanuts, pork, grain, cement products and kaolin are also exerting pressure on the region's existing inadequate transport infrastructure and also require improved road and rail access to the ports of Brisbane and Bundaberg.
6. The South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (includes Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast sub-regions), have just released its' Regional Strategy. WBBROC is concerned that, in particular, transport infrastructure proposals must be consistent between regions. We believe that the Federal Government has a critical role to play in co-ordinating transport infrastructure strategies between regions across Australia.

WBBROC would be happy to assist your inquiry with any further information that you may require.

Yours faithfully

Cr. Roger Nunn
President WBBROC

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