

5 February 2007

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: Tas.Luttrell.Reps@aph.gov.au

Submission No:.....192.....
Date Received: ...S-02-07.....
Secretary:

Sir,

Re: Inquiry into integration road/rail and interface with ports

Thanks for the opportunity to make this last-minute submission to the Standing Committee.

I noted you have received 189 submissions from all quarters except from a niche operator who is keen to provide a regional rail service to the ports.

El Zorro Transport Pty Ltd has conducted a rail operations business in Victoria for 7 years, mostly providing infrastructure maintenance trains used in the upkeep of the Victorian metropolitan rail network. The company intends to expand its business to provide a regional rail service in Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Given the lateness of this submission, may we submit our comment in dot point form? A cursory glance at the submissions received certainly makes it clear we are not alone in our views; nor do we offer unique insights to the issues and/or the solutions to be adopted.

The points we wish to make are:

- The rail network (especially the Victorian grain lines) are in poor condition
- Efficiencies would flow from rail standardisation between the States
- Further efficiencies would be achieved with the standardisation of rail operational systems and rail regulation throughout the nation
- Efficiencies could be achieved with a "one-stop shop" for track access, regulation/management.

- **Further efficiencies would flow from a reduction in the scope and nature of regulations to “a meaningful handful” only.**
- **The Victorian Government cannot achieve its 30% freight target with the present-day infrastructure**
- **Provision for dedicated freight tracks from Melbourne port to designated intermodal hubs needs to be considered in 2007 and delivered inside next 5-7 years if the freight target is to be met.**
- **Government needs to consider waiving access and terminal fees on export product in order for rail to compete fairly with road traffic.**
- **Improving turnaround time on grain trains ought to be a priority (reducing average turnaround from 48 hrs to 36 hrs is not impossible)**
- **Talk about rail needs to incorporate an understanding that rolling stock needs to be maintained and not all existing maintenance facilities are open to all current and/or potential new operators**
- **Rail services require infrastructure for loading , unloading, marshalling and parking trains**
- **Public Liability Insurance has been set at an extraordinarily high level (\$250m) by the regulators and track managers and it is an horrendous barrier to entry for new entrants into the rail transport industry**

We trust these insights from a rail operator’s perspective might round out your understanding and assist in your deliberations. We wish you well and look forward to release of your report.

Yours faithfully,

Geoff Tighe