



7 August 2006

Secretary: *J. L. Mee*
RECEIVED

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services
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Dear Sir

Inquiry into integration of regional rail and road networks and their interface with ports

A public hearing of the Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services Inquiry into the integration of regional rail and road networks and their interface with ports was held in Toowoomba on 7 April 2006. Mr David Simon, a Vice Chair of the Australian Trucking Association (ATA) provided evidence at the hearing.

As discussed at this hearing, the ATA is providing further information for the inquiry about transport infrastructure investment, including intermodal terminals.

Firstly, in its submission to this inquiry (no.112), the ATA stated:

... it is vital that governments work together to identify priorities for expenditure and deliver completed road construction and maintenance outcomes in a timely manner, which will enhance the productivity of the road freight transport industry for the benefit of primary and secondary industries, including export industries, and regional and urban communities.

AusLink offers this potential to improve the road network to meet the freight growth challenge, whilst recognising the need for consideration of rail infrastructure, access to ports and development of intermodal facilities for freight transfer between road and rail. The development of agreed investment appraisal guidelines, which include the need to assess both public and private investment opportunities, should provide a rational basis for government investment, whether from re-current expenditure or debt funding, or in partnership with private investment.

The ATA supports the establishment of a strategic land transport policy body, representing both public and private sectors, to establish priorities for land transport infrastructure investment from all possible sources, such decisions to be informed by a set of agreed investment assessment guidelines. This would separate the functions of strategic land transport planning from road ownership, management and charging which are currently affected by over-lapping responsibilities and functions.

In the absence of the land transport policy body mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the ATA believes that it is vital for road infrastructure investment priorities to be identified under AusLink. This view applies to both the AusLink national network, and regional and local roads.

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Of course the identification of AusLink road infrastructure investment priorities has been initiated with the corridor strategies.

This process of identification of roads funding has also been used with the AusLink Roads to Recovery program being nominated by local councils and groups of councils. In addition, the AusLink Black Spot projects can be nominated by anyone.

An example of black spot funding being advertised to the public is at the website of an ATA Foundation Sponsor, National Transport Insurance. Please see at: <http://www.nti.com.au/>

Also, the Government initiated a process this year for strategic regional planning, writing to all councils inviting funding applications for \$127 million to be made available.

The ATA 's view is that identification of road infrastructure improvements should include a focus for improvements that facilitate safe and efficient freight transport. For example, a bridge that impedes a Higher Mass Limits regime for the remainder of the route should be rectified.

In respect of intermodal facilities, the ATA supports AusLink 's initiatives to "facilitate the strategic development of nationally important intermodal freight facilities." Indeed, the AusLink Network is stated to include 'links to ports and airports and other rail, road and intermodal connections'

Clearly the Australian Government's offers to consider investment in the intermodal terminal at the Port of Launceston, Bell Bay and for a proposal for an intermodal terminal at Brighton are a reflection of the importance of port and other intermodal linkages.

In short, the ATA endorses an emphasis on intermodal terminals both inland and at ports. It recognises that a large proportion of funding for these terminals will need to be provided from private enterprise as AusLink funding is limited. Such use of public funds should ,however, be assessed on a benefit cost analysis and be subject to appropriate cost recovery.

Please contact me if you require further information.

Yours faithfully,



Stuart St Clair
Chief Executive