

Submission to Transport Committee Inquiryland: transport access to ports.
Capacity and operation of major ports

Most NT activity is centered around coastal shipping activity, oil and gas development and cattle exports. Interaction with the Port of Darwin over-all is a small part of the NT Trucking sectors task. Movements through the Port are small and we expected that this will remain so. It would be a fair assumption to say that it will be 20 to 30 years before any significant through freight levels are likely.

Movement of bulk export commodities, such as grain and coal

The history of mining in the NT would reveal that mining activity in the NT is driven by the same factors as anywhere else in the world, It is unpredictable, demand driven and depending on commodity prices for survival. Truckers undertake services with miners on the same basis.

The role of inter-modal freight hubs in regional areas

Road Trains service the Northern Territory with fast and reliable cost effective road services direct to all major interstate centers with just in time, door-to-door connections. Competition in the trucking sector over many years has ensured an extremely competitive seamless freight service. Little would be gained at this stage by having small regional freight hubs in remote Australia that would impose an added cost to the end user and serve no real purpose.

Opportunities to achieve greater efficiency in the use of existing infrastructure

Business Park and Railway Terminal

Interaction between the existing railway container loading/unloading arrangements at the Darwin rail terminal is less than satisfactory. The original operational intention that was implied when the terminal design was presented to freight forwarders was changed. When invited to established themselves at the Berrimah business park at considerably greater expense than the adjacent industrial land at Berrimah, One of the “selling points” was that that they (the forwarders) would have an operational advantage by being able to access there containers direct, basically through the back of there property. This proved to be a false assumption. The only operator to take up the option of moving to the business park found that the consignment and receipt of containers still had to employ extra equipment and staff to travel approx the same distance (some 5 km) to access their freight as those that remained at the nearby Berrimah estate. The operator also found that now having to access the public road system to receipt containers it is denied the ability to top up containers at the depot so axle loadings stay within the parameters set by NT roads authorities.

On-going structural failures at East Arm Port and the closure of stage one area while not of great concern to truckers are causing some heavy vehicles to re-route to the old Port located adjacent to the city center.

Lack of an appropriate neutral parking area for heavy vehicles in the Port area. Off-street parking is already an issue with 53.5 meter long vehicles seeking access to the Port area. Road Trains by the nature of design are not able to negotiate short U turns or effect reversing maneuvers. A multi-trailer vehicle traveling towards the Port in years to come will have no opportunity to stop, break up combinations or leave vehicles in a safe area clear of the access road. This should be address now before the

land in the area is developed by at least setting aside a suitable area. Ideally the lay down area would include a weighing device accessible to both entering and exiting traffic.

Major feeder roads into Darwin. There is effectively only one way into Darwin from Katherine north (320 kms). While the road is generally in good condition a need for more overtaking lanes is evident.

Sealing of the Tanami Road

The sealing of this road would bring advantages to the tourism industry by providing an alternative to the Stuart highway with direct access to the WA Kimberly and Ord River areas of Northern Western Australia. Tourist could then access the NT Top End then travel to the Kimberly's and return south Via the Tanami and Alice Springs. The road would provide a direct route for fresh produce from the Ord to southern capitals and would be a boost for moving cattle and freight between central Australia and the Ports of Wyndam, Derby and Broome..

Possible advantages from the use of intelligent tracking technology

The use of this technology is already in use across much of remote Australia. Demand will drive the development of ITS. We see no real advantage to truckers in a system that can track a container for instance and advise if the refrigeration unit is shut down between Alice Springs and Darwin. The drivers do regular visual checks anyway and attempt to effect repairs on the road. If the same container is on a train the reality is that there is nothing a forwarder can do anyway until the unit arrives in Darwin.

The role of the three levels of Government and the private sector in Providing and maintaining the regional transport network.

There is no doubt a high level of concern with regard to the standard of road maintenance in the NT. Heavy vehicle drivers report that major and minor highways are in decline. Many regional roads under local government control are in poor condition with the perception that lack of money and/or expertise is a contributor.

Truckers in the NT are used to looking at smashed equipment, blown tyres, broken springs, road accidents and a short life span for their equipment. However where once grader crews were a common sight on our roads they are now a rare sight.

While various local government organisations have there own separate priorities and varying levels of expertise this results in patchwork development instead of looking at remote Australia as one entity with the same needs.

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