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By: Mr Mike Taylor, Secretary, DOTARS

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SENATE ESTIMATES

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OPENING REMARKS Mike Taylor

Good morning Chairman and Senators.

With the agreement of the chairman and Senators,

I would like to make some brief opening comments in respect of the DOTARS portfolio that I think might help set the scene and provide some context for today's hearing.

The **2007-08 Budget** provides the Portfolio with additional funding to further improve the lives of all Australians.

Significantly, under AusLink 2, the Australian Government will invest a further \$22.3 billion in major land transport infrastructure from 2009-10, providing certainty to State and Territory governments and the public of the Australian Government's commitment to future road and rail improvements.

As well, the Government announced that an additional \$250 million will be provided under the AusLink Strategic Regional programme in 2006-07 to local councils to meet a large unmet demand for regional transport infrastructure projects.

South Australian local councils will continue to benefit from \$57 million over four years for local roads, recognising the relative disadvantage of current distribution arrangements.

The 2007-08 Budget also provides around \$350 million for a range of measures across the transport and regional services portfolio aimed at improving the safety, security and other opportunities for all Australians, including:

- \$57.1 million to further improve Australia's security measures for international and domestic aircraft
- \$74.2 million to continue assistance to national aerial firefighting and bushfire mitigation, and for a co-contribution to upgrade the Launceston levee system
- \$46 million to support regional aviation and airports
- \$71.8 million for the National Capital Authority to implement Griffin Legacy planning initiatives, including redevelopment of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way roundabout and Constitution Avenue

- \$21.7 million to CASA for drug and alcohol testing of aviation industry employees and for air transport safety risk mitigation through the establishment of a more comprehensive aviation safety oversight model
- \$36 million for infrastructure and safety improvements on the Indian Ocean Territories, including construction of a freight and passenger facility on Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and asbestos removal on Christmas Island
- \$23.9 million to assist the Government of the Republic of Indonesia with transport safety improvements; and
- \$4.5 million to improve the representation of women on decision-making bodies in regional Australia.

In addition to planning for the new initiatives arising from the 2007-08 Budget, the department continues to work on a wide range of important issues some of which I would like to highlight now.

The department continues its **Regional Services** work, including work as lead agency for the East Kimberley COAG Trial - work is currently under way in partnership with the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs - to roll out community leadership development courses for people in these communities in addition to a wide range of other work..

In the Indian Ocean **Territories**, the department will oversee a significant budget spend over the next four years on safety improvements and new infrastructure projects. This is additional to the annual allocation of over \$70 million for infrastructure renewal and services for these territories.

In relation to Norfolk Island, our focus will be on working with the new Norfolk Island Government to assist the implementation of it's commitment to improve financial sustainability and governance, and capitalising on the recent promising increase in the number of tourists visiting Norfolk Island.

The **Australian Transport Safety Bureau** has released its final report on the tragic 15-fatality accident near Lockhart River.

An inquest by the Queensland State Coroner is scheduled to commence next month.

The Coroner has commenced the inquest into the *Malu Sara* tragedy in the Torres Strait, for which the ATSB's marine investigation report is a central document.

The **Office of Transport Security** oversaw the March 31, 2007 introduction of new aviation security measures restricting the quantity of Liquids, Aerosols and Gels (LAGs) carried on board aircraft flying to and from Australia.

This major new initiative was achieved with minimal disruption to the travelling public.

The success of the introduction was the culmination of months of hard work by a range of DOTARS staff along with airlines, airports, foreign governments and regulators, duty free retailers and the travel agents.

In March the OTS completed the significant task of assessing over 900 transport security programs covering major airports and airlines as well Regulated Air Cargo Agents. Detailed guidance for industry was an important feature of the process.

Following the recent budget announcements, the Office of Transport Security will be responsible for implementing a range of additional transport security initiatives. These include:

- an extension of domestic checked bag screening requirements to an additional 26 Australian airports, where the screening of passengers and their carry on baggage already occurs, and
- further improvements to the existing air cargo security regime.

The **Aviation and Airports** division has handled a number of major legislative initiatives, and

- recently organised the 5th APEC Transportation Ministers' meeting in Adelaide, hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister, as part of the programme of APEC meetings being held in Australia in 2007.

The meeting was attended by Ministers or their representatives from the 21 APEC economies; and the official APEC Observer groups and by some 250 delegates.

The APEC TMM focussed on three themes:

- transport safety,
- transport security and the
- transport sector's contribution to liberalisation and facilitation of trade.

At the meeting, Ministers finalised a Joint Ministerial Statement giving direction to economies and the APEC Transportation Working Group on future work.

Legislation to transfer the airspace regulatory function from Airservices Australia to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority has been enacted and the Office of Airspace Regulation is to come into force from 1 July 2007.

The Government has also recently released its response to the Productivity Commission inquiry into airport pricing which sets the framework for aeronautical pricing and investment at our leased Federal airports..

Under **AusLink**,

- 24 corridor strategies have been undertaken with the states and territories.

- Further to continue to support local government's efforts to maintain the bulk of the nation's roads, there will also be an extended Roads to Recovery Programme, now operating until June 2014, and

- extra funding for the AusLink Strategic Regional Programme, both this year, and \$300 million more in the forward years.

- In addition, the effective Black Spot Programme has had its spending increased in real terms under AusLink 2 to \$60 million a year.

In closing, I am pleased to advise that the **department** has received the Institute of Public Affairs and Administration Gold Award for its 2005-06 Annual Report. - I consider this Award to be a significant recognition of the efforts of our Department in striving to provide a high level of transparency in the frank and informative reporting of our performance in delivering the outcomes Government and the public seeks from us.

I hope that my comments have provided a context for the range and diversity of activities of the department. The Department and portfolio looks forward to taking questions from the Senate Committee.