

29 May 2009

The Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary and Committee members

Inquiry to the Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Amendment Bill 2009

On behalf of the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV), I wish to thank the Committee for providing the opportunity to comment on the Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Amendment Bill 2009.

The MAV welcomes the Commonwealth's Nation Building agenda and sees great merit in the Federal Government providing funds for the revitalisation of ageing infrastructure and for the provision of new infrastructure. Nation building activity is vital for accommodating Australia's growing population and for stimulating our nation's economy in challenging conditions.

The MAV provides in principle support for the proposed amendments to the *Auslink (National Land Transport) Act 2005* (the Principal Act). It is my understanding that the legislation provides for the continuation of strategic roads programs that are of critical importance to the local government sector, with the major change being the name of these programs.

As the responsible road authorities for approximately 80 per cent of the Victorian road network, the local government sector relies on the Roads to Recovery (R2R) Program for ensuring the ongoing safety and upgrade of municipal roads. The MAV has consistently welcomed Victoria's R2R funding allocation of \$350 million for the period 2009 to 2014, and would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Commonwealth for funding certainty beyond this time.

Furthermore, the MAV requests that depreciation costs for plant and equipment, used as part of in-house council construction teams, should be included as eligible costs for R2R projects. Under the current arrangements, these costs are excluded. This would provide for a consistent approach between contracted and in-house provision of road infrastructure.

Other nation building programs of critical importance to community safety in Victoria include the *Boom Gates for Rail Crossings* and *Black Spot* Programs. The MAV, in partnership with the Victorian Department of Transport, has been assisting councils to improve their approach to railway level crossing safety in the State, and Commonwealth funding for active protection of crossings reinforces the message that railway level safety remains a serious safety issue within Victoria.

As such, the MAV can provide in-principle support to the proposed legislative change on the basis that the operation of the Auslink programs of interest to local government is not affected.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Skye Holcombe, Policy Adviser, on (03) 9667 5532 or at sholcombe@mav.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Spence', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ROB SPENCE
Chief Executive Officer