

National Local Roads and Transport Congress

The Shepparton Communiqué

17 June 2008

Preamble

Delegates to the 2008 National Local Roads and Transport Congress meeting in Shepparton, Victoria, reaffirm local government's commitment to the Local Government's Roads and Transport Strategy 2006–2016. Delegates emphasise the importance of sustainability of the local road network and the Roads to Recovery and Strategic Regional Programs.

Whilst local roads and transport are core deliverables for local government, they can not, however, be viewed in isolation from the broader issue of local government financial sustainability. Delegates continue to call for long-term financial sustainability for local government by the provision of a fair share of at least 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (excluding GST) to local government as an untied intergovernmental transfer.

As representatives of the sphere of government closest to the community, delegates welcome recent announcements by Transport Ministers on their vision for the Australian transport system which states:

Australians want a national transport system that is safe and secure, efficient, competitive and integrated, sustainable and reliable and which supports and enhances the nation's social, environmental and economic prosperity.

This will be achieved when:

- *Freight and services logistics systems are integrated across modes and operate efficiently and competitively with only necessary and nationally consistent regulation;*
- *People can access employment and the services and community resources they need safely, reliably and routinely without undue delay because of urban congestion or lack of public transport; and*
- *Transport systems are planned, built, operated and regulated to minimise their impact on the environment and energy consumption¹.*

As owner and manager of more than 80% of the nation's road network on which more than 25% of vehicle kilometers are travelled, local government acknowledges it has an important part to play in the delivery of the 'first and last mile' of this vision, in its own

¹ ATC Communiqué 2 May 2008

right and in partnership with other spheres of government through land use planning, community engagement and in the provision of transport infrastructure.

Local government's contribution to this vision can only be achieved with appropriate resources.

Delegates note the establishment of Infrastructure Australia (IA) and the opportunity this provides for the planning of transport on a national basis. Local government welcomes the appointment of Sir Rod Eddington as chair and all other Advisory Board members, in particular Professor Peter Newman, as the member with a local government background.

Local government calls on IA and all levels of government to ensure that transport systems meet the needs of communities in urban, regional, rural and remote areas.

Priorities for Local Government to Deliver the 'First and Last Mile' of this Vision

Freight and Service Logistic Systems

Local government recognises and understands that emerging new freight-efficient road transport technologies have an important role to play if Australia is to meet the challenge of the doubling of the freight task by 2020. Local government has already shown that it can work with the freight industry to meet the infrastructure challenges of new technologies and is committed to working even more closely with industry and government in the future.

Local government recognises the need for, and seeks the assistance of the National Transport Commission, for the development of standard policies for Higher Mass Limits and other freight-efficient vehicles access at the council level. But any response should recognise that the social and economic impacts which fall disproportionately on rural and remote communities need to be equitably shared to promote resilience.

Local government calls on the Commonwealth, states and territories and the road transport industry to recognise that:

- local government has responsibilities to its communities on how it spends its available resources and how it meets all of the other expectations of communities including the access, safety and amenity of its citizens;
- many councils are financially constrained (confirmed by the Productivity Commission);
- local government receives no direct funding for the use of local roads by heavy vehicles;
- the need for partnerships between all levels of government and industry to fund local transport solutions;

- existing and growing skill shortages in local government;
- rail has an appropriate and important role to play in transporting freight to reduce road traffic on local roads and improve road safety; and
- there is an essential role of strategic located multimodal transport hubs

Local government, consistent with the Intergovernmental Agreement on Cost Shifting, calls for the development of mechanisms which enable it to recover the costs imposed and the investment required to provide access to the emerging fleets of freight efficient vehicles to the local road system.

Rail

Local government views revitalisation of rail in regional Australia (including the establishment of the inland rail route between Melbourne and Brisbane) as essential to contribute to meeting the expected growth in the land transport freight task.

Local government notes the announcement in the Budget of \$3 million for a Grain Rail Task Force to develop viable long-term solutions to grain transport in NSW because of the implications for the local road system. Local government's view is that the transportation of grain is a matter of concern across a number of jurisdictions and should be handled on a national rather than on a jurisdictional basis.

People's Access to Employment and Services

Local road funding and management

Local government acknowledges the Australian Government commitment for transport funding to 2014 including \$350m per annum Roads to Recovery funding, \$300 million Strategic Regional funding and \$60 million per annum for the Blackspots Program. This funding will provide much needed support to assist local government to address the continuing backlog in local roads maintenance and renewal, especially in rural and regional Australia, resulting from the ageing of infrastructure and growing community expectations.

Local government looks forward to working with the Australian Government on the new legislation and the development of guidelines for these programs.

Urban transport solutions including public transport

Delegates agree with the Federal Government's acknowledgement that cities must work and function well. In order for this to happen the Federal Government must invest in the provision for urban public transport including outer urban growth areas of cities.

Delegates note the formation of a Major Cities Unit and welcome the Budget announcements to undertake studies to tackle urban congestion and planning by providing \$75 million to the states to undertake a series of studies into major urban transport projects. The Commonwealth funding together with the contribution from the states of \$57.5 million will allow planning for a number key urban projects to progress rapidly.

However, more needs to be done. Delegates recognize that these studies are limited to planning work and look forward to more substantive investment by the Australia Government in urban transport infrastructure in the future.

Delegates recognised the need for access to public transport within all communities.

Mobility and equitable access for all Australians.

Local government notes the Government's recognition for urban access and mobility but calls on the Government to recognise the equally important need for access to employment, recreation, tourism and other services in regional and remote areas, especially where there are no public transport alternatives.

Government can do more to ensure that local roads meet the standard expected by the Australian community and the emerging needs of industry, by:

- making Roads to Recovery a permanently funded program and maintained in real terms;
- dedicated funding of timber bridge maintenance and renewal;
- an active policy to address widespread technical skill shortages; and
- funding for asset management systems and the development of a national local roads data system

Local government acknowledges the Australian Government's 2008-09 Budget announcements to assist up to 150 regional airports to implement basic security measures and subsidies for weekly flights to remote communities and calls for an ongoing program to fund security requirements and capital upgrades for local government airports.

Safety

The death and injury caused by road vehicle crashes is a national tragedy and remains a major concern to local communities. Local Government supports strategies to achieve *Vision Zero* through a systematic approach to improvements in road infrastructure (such as the Blackspots Program), level crossing improvements, vehicle design, speed enforcement, and educational programs for drivers.

Transport Systems, Environment and Energy Use

Local government recognises that future transport developments must be sympathetic to the impact on the environment, especially greenhouse gas emissions and the increasing scarcity of the supply of oil, and seeks to work with the Federal Government to establish sustainable communities to meet these challenges.

Specifically local government is seeking:

- an integrated whole of government approach to urban and regional transport, land use planning and service provision;
- expansion of programs that encourage more physically active transport such “active transport programs” across urban, regional and rural Australia and providing for funding for the associated infrastructure eg bike paths;
- prioritised funding for outer metropolitan growth areas that are public transport poor;
- transport systems that provide a balance between urban amenity, freight efficiency and viable alternatives to the use of private motor vehicles;
- equitable access, particularly to essential services, through integrated planning and the provision of appropriate transport services for all regional communities;
- efficient movement of freight vehicles through local communities in a way which recognises community concerns for safety and amenity; and
- a comprehensive government policy for the production and effective use of alternative fuel sources including gas and non-food biofuels

Local government urges the Federal Government to immediately review and amend the graduated formula for the charging of Fringe Benefits Tax on motor vehicles to properly reflect government and community need to positively encourage reduced use of motor vehicles in order to improve health and air quality and invest in public transport to assist passengers achieve less reliance upon fossil fuels and cars.

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