

The Australian Local Government Association

National Local Roads and Transport Congress

**The Mackay Communiqué
A Framework for the New Strategy**

10 November 2009

Preamble

1. Recognising the critical importance of Australia's transport system for the economic and social wellbeing of the nation, delegates to the 2009 National Local Roads and Transport Congress meeting in Mackay, Queensland, called for greater collaboration between all levels of government on the planning, delivery and funding of transport infrastructure at the local, regional, state and national level.
2. Delegates endorsed the need for the ALGA Board to update the Local Government Roads and Transport Strategy 2006–2016, to reflect the current policy and economic environment as well as taking into account the position adopted by delegates on the key issues set out below.
3. Delegates welcomed the ALGA Board's commitment to launch the revised strategy at ALGA's next National General Assembly in June 2010 and called on the Board to also develop a plan to drive the roads and transport agenda forward.
4. As representatives of the sphere of government closest to the community, delegates welcomed Federal Government funding initiatives in relation to transport and infrastructure. Local government also applauded the Federal Government's decision to support improved planning and management of councils through the establishment of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government and the Local Government Reform Fund.
5. Local government embraced the transport vision adopted by the Australian Transport Council (attached).
6. As owner and manager of more than 80% of the nation's road network on which more than 25% of the transport task is undertaken, local government acknowledged the importance of continuous improvement in the way governments meet the transport task through the provision of transport infrastructure and in partnership with each other through land use and wider city or regional planning.
7. Local government recognised there will be technological innovations but acknowledges that the motor vehicle will remain the dominant form of transport in our cities and regional areas for the foreseeable future.
8. The projected growth in population to 35 million by 2049 will require high standards of planning in our cities and regional areas. Consideration should be given to the most appropriate locations to settle the expanded population including examining the scope for decentralising industry and government agencies. Planning for this population increase should recognise the critical importance of retaining land and providing transport links for sustainable food and agricultural production.
9. Social cohesion and inclusion is dependent on access to social, medical and educational facilities in both urban and regional Australia and is critically dependent on an efficient and effective transport system.
10. Local government recognised the importance of and the need for collaboration on developing strategies to adapt to changes in the way transport will need to be delivered in the future, eg in a low carbon economy.
11. Whilst local roads and transport are core deliverables for local government, they cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader issue of local government financial sustainability. Local

government's contribution to the transport vision can only be achieved with appropriate resources.

Local road funding and management

Objective: Permanent and certain funding arrangements for local roads

12. Local government has responsibility for the vast majority of Australia's road infrastructure (over 80% by length). These roads are currently predominantly funded by councils from rate revenues however Commonwealth funding, especially through the Roads to Recovery Program, is a valuable source of funding to assist councils to improve the standards of their roads.
13. Local government called for Roads to Recovery to be made permanent and indexed in line with the cost increases of roads and bridges. Funding should not be unnecessarily administratively complex. The delegates called on the ALGA Board to develop campaign to lobby for more funding from both the Federal and State Governments.
14. Local government called on the Federal Government, in light of the High Court's recent judgment in the Pape case, to provide certainty for direct local road funding from the Commonwealth to councils.
15. If the Federal and State Governments decide to move to a system of funding roads by road user charging then local government calls on them to ensure that local roads are included. Local government must be consulted through the ALGA prior to the adoption of any proposed roads user charging system that applies to local roads. Any road user charging arrangement must result in appropriate funding for local roads.
16. If the Government does not choose to adopt road user charging, then local government seeks hypothecation of a fixed portion of fuel excise revenue for funding of local roads in addition to current funding programs. Local government needs to develop a consistent set of data on the condition of local roads to provide evidence of the funding gap.
17. Local government called on the Federal Government to support improvement in the management of the 650,000 kilometres of local roads by funding programs aimed at improving the management capacity of councils and supporting further technical work to improve the maintenance process and outcomes of local roads.

Transport Planning

Objective: Establish transport and planning systems that improve amenity, public transport, social inclusion, freight efficiency and to provide viable alternatives to the private motor vehicle.

18. Local government welcomed the decision of the Federal Government to involve itself more directly in the planning of our cities to accommodate the expected population of 35 million by 2049 and looks forward to working with the Federal Government on these issues. The efficient operation of our cities is a matter for all levels of government.
19. Local government called on the Federal Government to acknowledge that urban planning issues extend beyond the capital cities and are just as important in provincial centres and sea and tree change areas of Australia
20. In developing plans for our cities and regional centres there is a need to balance the requirements of communities and industry so that efficient and equitable outcomes can be achieved. The needs of all in our society including the disabled and the aged, must be taken into account as part of the planning process.
21. Local government recognised the need for better integrated transport planning between adjoining local government areas, state government and Federal Government. Local government encouraged the integrated planning which links social infrastructure such as housing, access to schools and health facilities to transport infrastructure which is essential to employment growth in middle, outer metropolitan and regional areas.

22. Planning for our cities needs to recognise the changing transport patterns of individuals who must integrate a number of points in their daily transport requirements to meet family and work commitments, eg particularly working families.
23. Local government recognised that future transport developments must take account of 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.
24. The design of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) should recognise the transport system is likely to remain heavily dependent on oil for the foreseeable future.
25. All levels of government need to develop and coordinate plans for dealing with disruptions to oil supplies and, in the longer term, the increased price of oil especially greater use of Australia's abundant gas resources.
26. Local government recognised the need for State and Federal Governments to develop alternative approaches to dealing with congestion such as congestion charging. In developing these schemes local government called for a whole of road network approach to be taken so that congestion is not simply transferred from the freeway or arterial road system on to local roads.
27. 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 across urban, regional and rural Australia and provide for funding for the associated infrastructure eg bike paths;
 - equitable access to services, particularly to essential services, through integrated planning and the provision of appropriate transport services for all regional communities; and
 - a comprehensive government policy for the production and effective use of alternative fuel sources including gas and non-food biofuels.
28. Local government urged the Federal Government to immediately restrict the graduated formula for the charging of Fringe Benefits Tax on motor vehicles to vehicle owners that do not have access to public transport. The FBT should be used to positively encourage reduced use of motor vehicles in order to improve health outcomes and air quality and to invest in public transport to assist passengers to achieve less reliance upon fossil fuels and cars.

Public Transport

Objective: Australian cities to be adequately serviced with public transport to provide a viable alternative to the use of private vehicles and to meet existing population and future population growth.

29. Local government acknowledged the initiative of the Federal Government to become involved in the provision of public transport in capital cities and reminded the Federal Government of the public transport needs of regional centres.
30. There is a need to urgently deal with the backlog in public transport in existing areas and to make early provision for it in newly developing areas. This should be achieved by establishing long term public transport plans for all urban areas with an appropriate funding source and implementation schedule. The public transport needs of outer metropolitan growth should receive priority.
31. Governments need to encourage and develop transport systems that provide a balance between urban amenity, freight efficiency and viable alternatives to the use of private motor vehicles. A priority is the efficient movement of freight vehicles through local communities must be in a way which recognises community concerns for safety and amenity.

Mobility and Access for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

Objective: Equitable access, particularly to essential services, for all regional communities

32. Australians living in rural, regional and remote Australia face particular transport handicaps with limited or no public transport and dependence on the car for their transport needs. People living in Indigenous communities also have high levels of dependence on the car for transport. Everyday services such as medical services are increasingly being centralised in larger regional centres which provide a greater range of facilities. This means, however, reduced access for those living away from those centres and even greater dependence on motor vehicles.
33. Federal and state governments need to recognise that people in regional and rural Australia have no alternative to the use of motor vehicles to meet their everyday needs of education, freight, industry and social needs.
34. Ownership of regional airports was transferred to local government without ongoing means of financing their maintenance or upgrading. The Federal Government needs to show leadership and provide financial support to establish a proper hierarchy of regional airports.
35. Local government welcomed the studies undertaken by the Federal Government into rural rail freight services. It recognises that rural passenger trains have only a limited role to play but that rail has a key role to play for freight which will require selective investment in lines and associated infrastructure if rail freight is to be competitive in an environment of changing needs and technologies.
36. Note a further aspect of access in regional Australia is good access to broadband and mobile phone coverage.
37. Local government called on the Federal Government to:
 - Recognise the special public transport needs of regional Australia especially in regional centres;
 - Recognise the high level of dependence on motor vehicles for access and mobility for those living in regional Australia, the cost of which is exacerbated by higher fuel costs;
 - Recognise the special mobility and access issues for Indigenous communities;
 - Recognise that the high level of dependency on motor vehicles for mobility and access in rural and regional Australia will result in the greater likely impact of oil shortages or price increases on individuals, communities and industry;
 - Provide an equivalent level of funding for regional rail services as is provided for urban rail;
 - Ensure that a full assessment of the impact on the road system is undertaken when rail services are closed and provide appropriate funding to compensate for roads damage caused by the additional freight being moved onto the road system;
 - Provide access for all Australians to the broadband network and full mobile phone coverage of the arterial road network and small populations centres; and
 - Provide dedicated funding for timber bridge maintenance and renewal.

Road safety

Objective: Reducing road deaths and serious injuries on local roads

38. The death and injury caused by road vehicle crashes is a national tragedy and remains a major concern to all communities. Local government supported strategies to reduce accidents and lessen their impact through improvements in road infrastructure (such as the Blackspots Program), level crossing improvements, vehicle design, speed enforcement, and educational programs for drivers.
39. Local government recognised the principles of Safe Systems approach to road safety. However this approach needs to be cognisant of the vast distances in rural and regional Australia and that some speeds proposed under Safe Systems could result in considerable economic costs from increased travel times. Local government supports realistic and practical speed limits for low volume roads.
40. Local government can play a vital role in road safety by providing good quality roads that have as many hazards as possible removed.

Freight management

Objective: Efficient movement of freight through local communities in a way that recognises community concerns for safety and amenity

41. Local government recognised and understands that emerging 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 other levels of government in the future.
42. Local government recognised the need for the development of standard policies for Higher Mass Limits and other freight-efficient vehicles access at the council level and seeks the assistance of the National Transport Commission in this area. Access policies should recognise that the social and economic impacts fall disproportionately on rural and remote communities.
43. Local government called on the Federal, State and Territory Governments and the road transport industry to recognise that:
44. Local government has responsibilities to its communities on how it spends its available resources and how it meets all of the expectations of communities including the access, safety and amenity of its citizens;
45. Many councils face financial constraints which make it difficult for them to finance road upgrading to meet the needs of freight efficient vehicles;
46. Local government receives no direct funding for the use of local roads by heavy vehicles;
47. There is a need for partnerships between all levels of government and industry such as mining to fund local transport solutions; and
48. There is an essential role for multimodal transport hubs in the Australian freight system.
49. Local government, consistent with the 2006 Intergovernmental Agreement on Cost Shifting, called for the development of mechanisms which enable it to recover the costs imposed and the investment required to provide access for freight efficient vehicles to the local road system and to develop and upgrade existing multimodal transport hubs.
50. Local government considers revitalisation of rail in regional Australia (including the establishment of the inland rail route between Melbourne and Brisbane) to be essential to contribute to meeting the expected growth in the land transport freight task.

Local Government Sustainability

Objective: Long term sustainability of local road and transport systems is dependent on financing and the ongoing access to an appropriately skilled workforce.

51. The significance of road funding in council budgets mean the sustainability of this infrastructure is closely tied to the financial sustainability of councils themselves.
52. Delegates noted that the Federal Government collects more than 80% of the nation tax revenue whilst local government collects about 3% of the total tax revenues.
53. Delegates reiterated their 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.
54. Local government recognised the importance of workforce planning including the attraction and retention of appropriate skilled personnel.
55. The ageing of the technical staff of local government has the potential to create major deficiencies in council capabilities to manage its physical infrastructure in the medium term. Local government called on the Federal

and State Governments to work with it to develop and retain the people with the necessary technical skills for the ongoing management of its assets.

Cr Geoff Lake

Chair of the 2009 National Local Roads and Transport Congress

Attachment

Australian Transport Council Vision for Transport in Australia

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 consumption.