

## **COMMUNIQUE**

### **2013 NATIONAL LOCAL ROADS AND TRANSPORT CONGRESS**

Over 250 delegates from councils across Australia met in Alice Springs on 13 - 14 November 2013 at the fourteenth National Local Roads and Transport Congress. The Congress recognised the essential role of local infrastructure in communities across Australia in particular the importance of local government roads and regional airports in achieving social, economic and environmental outcomes at the local and national level.

The Congress welcomed the Prime Minister's commitment to invest in the nation's infrastructure and how it will drive Australia's future prosperity. Delegates resolved to work collaboratively with the Government on productivity gains through agreed roads and transport reform, and targeted infrastructure investment.

Delegates applauded the Government's commitment to the Roads to Recovery program, Black Spots funding, Regional Aviation Access program, and the Outback Way of \$33 million, and the Commonwealth's commitment to a \$300 million Bridges Renewal Program.

The Congress received the first national State of the Assets Report. This Report, prepared by JRA, is a national examination of the quality, function and capacity of over 60% of local government's road and bridge assets worth over \$98 billion. The report reveals that over \$8 billion in sealed roads, \$1.9 billion of unsealed roads and \$1.4 billion in concrete and timber bridges are in poor or very poor condition.

Delegates noted the adverse impacts of poor and very poor local roads and bridges on national transport productivity as well as the detriment to community access.

Delegates called on the Federal Government to provide additional direct financial support to local government to address both this critical infrastructure backlog of more than \$11.3 billion, and to further assist in the development of asset management plans.

The Congress noted the importance of local road access to national road reforms under the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the significance of these reforms to achieving improved national productivity. Delegates welcomed the development of a Performance Based Standards (PBS) Route Assessment Tool to assist councils to undertake route assessment for the provision of access under this new regime.

Delegates resolved to continue to work with the Regulator on national road reforms, including better integrated transport planning and data management. In this regard delegates support the NHVR commitment to share data that is collected and compiled to assist councils with strategic planning to improve infrastructure investment by all levels of government.

Delegates further resolved to work collaboratively with all levels of government and industry to support appropriate reforms recognising that they must not jeopardise road safety, community amenity or lead to unacceptable decline in local and regional road conditions. Delegates highlighted the importance of appropriate funding for maintenance, and in some cases upgrading of local roads and bridges, to support these reforms.

The Congress received a report on the Heavy Vehicle Investment and Charging project. Delegates acknowledged the importance of this work and its implications for industry and all road providers. Delegates welcomed the potential of the reforms, provided they yield additional direct funding to local governments to address the first and last mile issues. Delegates resolved to support the work of Transport Ministers on these proposals and look forward to further consultation on this matter.

Delegates noted the critical role of regional airports and the essential services to regional, rural and remote communities provided by local airstrips and the varying challenges faced by local councils. Delegates expressed grave concern at the viability of regional airports and the financial burden placed upon local government authorities in the provision of air services. The Congress called on the Federal, state and territory governments to work with councils to develop, amongst others, regional airport networks, master plans, state aviation strategies, and empirical research for evidence based policy and strategy development to ensure the sustainability of regional, rural and remote air services.

The Congress noted the work of the Australian Airports Association on regional airports and resolved that ALGA work with them and other stakeholders to develop a plan to put to government to ensure the sustainability of regional airports and local airstrips.

Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the National Local Roads and Transport Policy Agenda 2010 – 20 and their confidence in ALGA to pursue the 2013 Congress outcomes with the Federal Government and through other relevant intergovernmental forums.

Delegates thanked Alice Springs Town Council for hosting the 2013 Congress and agreed to meet next year in Tamworth NSW.