

BULLETIN

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02

ISSUED APRIL 2014

INTRODUCTION

Our freight network interconnects the nation, forming a backbone for Western Australia's future prosperity. It relies heavily on its ability to move freight across the nation and from regions to their ports. An efficient and well-protected port and freight network is therefore a fundamental precursor for economic growth and greater productivity in all Australian states and territories.



“INFRASTRUCTURE AUSTRALIA HAS IDENTIFIED LONG TERM PRECINCT AND CORRIDOR PROTECTION AS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES ACROSS ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT AND REQUIRES A NATIONAL APPROACH TO PROVIDE A LONG TERM FOCUS ON THIS ISSUE. THERE IS SIGNIFICANT SCOPE TO IMPROVE PLANNING TO PROTECT PRECINCTS AND CORRIDORS, AND MAXIMISE THEIR USE.”
(NATIONAL LAND FREIGHT STRATEGY, 2012)

Western Australian seaports are some of the most critical for our nation with around 47% of total national trade passing through Western Australian ports in the Financial Year of 2011-2012 (refer to Figure 1).

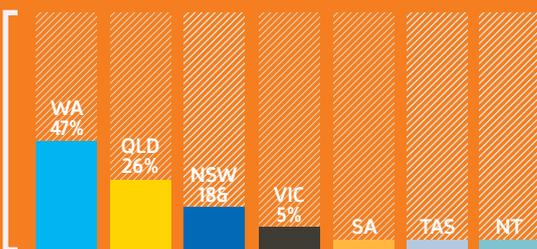


Figure 1: Total national trade through Australian seaports, mass tonnes, FY 2011-2013 (Source: Ports Australia, 2014)

THE ROLE OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM IN PROTECTING OUR PORTS AND FREIGHT CORRIDORS

Freight growth and an overall trend towards larger shipping will translate into larger cargo transfers per visit, and a corresponding increase in land-side movements, and a need for larger lay-down areas for cargo handling, staging and distribution. It is therefore essential that seaports and supply chains be appropriately acknowledged and addressed through forward thinking land use and transport policy.

A challenge for the comprehensive protection of key port facilities, freight nodes and infrastructure corridors, is not just about cities. Nor is it just about roads and railways. Some of our most trade-intensive ports are located in regional areas and within emerging communities such as those along the Pilbara coast in Western Australia. These locations require careful and methodical approaches to ensure the proper integration of land, transport, infrastructure and environmental planning.

The optimal aim of successful urban policy should be to integrate ports and freight facilities seamlessly into the wider urban policy context, with an equal emphasis on landside networks and seaside linkages.

According to the Department of Transport's (DOT) Western Australian Regional Freight Transport Network Plan there is a need for all major ports to undertake long-term master planning to guide the development of the port and its environs into the future. This will provide a better understanding of the ports integration with transport infrastructure and freight networks, thereby assisting national, state and local transport and land use planning agencies to integrate port, road and rail access corridors into the broader planning processes.



An information paper recently released by Ports Australia and co-funded by the Freight and Logistics Council of Western Australia (FLCWA) (*Leading Practice: Port & Supply Chain Protection... Current Practices & Future Opportunities*) presents a strategic view of leading approaches to port, freight and corridor protection. It was developed to assist the industry and government address the critical need for enhanced protection – a matter outlined in both the National Port Strategy and National Land Freight Strategy. The document can be downloaded from here: [Link](#).

The paper concluded the infrastructure corridors connecting urban development to national seaports, freight nodes, manufacturing, storage and handling activities, together with port facilities, require a greater level of protection against land use and transport planning concerns. The paper also proposes a series of measures that will assist in mitigating present threats to freight and port traffic corridors. This bulletin draws upon these findings and considers them in the context of Western Australia

THE NEXUS BETWEEN INTENTION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Ports Australia's investigations assert that in the past there has been inadequate protection of key port facilities, freight nodes and infrastructure corridors across Australia. It concludes that whilst policy *intention* has been generally sound, statutory *implementation* and consistency throughout planning and transport regulatory instruments has been weak.

The Western Australian planning system can be seen as progressive in the area of policy. A number of state government policy documents exist which identify the need to protect port, freight and corridor infrastructure. In addition, the Western Australian Planning Commission's (WAPC) Infrastructure Coordinating Committee has recently commenced work on reviewing infrastructure corridor protection mechanisms, including consideration beyond audible noise.

Despite these high level initiatives, it is Ports Australia and the FLCWA's view that there has been a disconnect between high-level strategic policy and the statutory implementation of these principles at the grassroots level.

Strategic freight corridor and port protection plans will only be as effective as the statutory planning tools that are prepared to implement them. Translating state and regional aspirations to local planning schemes is not always successful as it relies on the comprehensive identification of corridors and nodes in the first instance.

To properly capitalise on the State government policy intentions, local government planning schemes are required to demonstrate to the relevant body (WAPC) that 'State Interests' have been appropriately captured in the new/amended planning scheme. It is typically a subjective matter as to how well the local government planning scheme has had 'due regard' to the State Planning Policy matters.

It is also subjective as to how well freight corridors have been protected through the development proposals that are assessed

by the relevant agencies at the time of making an application, in both the quality and rigour in the assessment and the decision making process.

Refer to Figure 2: Key strategic and statutory planning and transport documents informing freight related planning decisions.

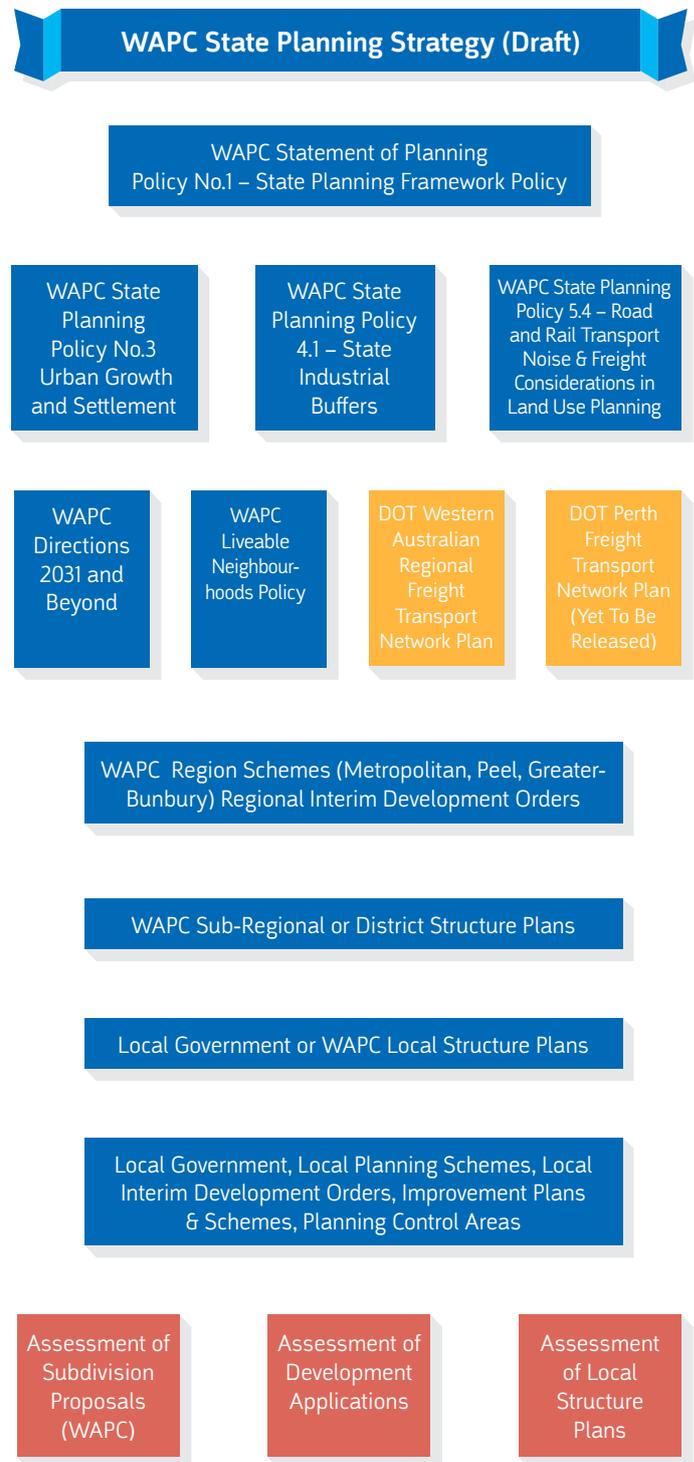


Figure 2: Key strategic and statutory planning and transport documents informing freight related planning decisions.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

It is evident that substantial transport and planning reform is underway. The DOT's *Western Australian Regional Freight Transport Network Plan* sets the strategic priorities of the Western Australian government to manage future freight growth in regional Western Australia and address its cumulative impacts over a long-term horizon to 2031 and beyond. In addition, the Department is also preparing the *Perth Freight Transport Network Plan*, which is anticipated for release during 2014.

The *Perth Freight Transport Network Plan* will define the strategic freight network and its integration with major nodes such as industrial land and ports. The Plan is underpinned by robust forecasts of the future freight task for roads, railways and ports. This information should be an important starting point for a new dialogue about the importance of freight and ways to maintain amenity for urban areas and ensure efficiency for freight operations, especially as this activity is likely to occur beyond daylight hours in the future.

Whilst WA's State Planning Policies appear to be generally accepted by the planning and transport community, a number of suggested improvements (put forward by the FLCWA) could be made to better align the various planning policy documents and facilitate the implementation of these provisions at a state and local government level. The following section considers some of the initiatives, some conceptual, others which are earmarked proposals.

Dedicated State Planning Policy: Economic Infrastructure

One possible method could include a dedicated State Planning Policy to protect key state infrastructure (e.g. power lines, water pipelines, gas pipelines, and freight corridors) to better articulate a consolidated approach to port and freight facility identification and protection.

Similar to the ways airports are protected, either through airspace restrictions or noise and disturbance measures (and in the case of Perth Airport, via a dedicated *State Planning Policy – No. 5.1*), a dedicated State Planning Policy to better protect key freight nodes and transport corridors under the umbrella of 'Economic Infrastructure' could prove to be extremely useful.

A stand-alone State Planning Policy could also address a broader range of critical land use issues (such as a stronger focus on 'appropriateness of use' in the early stages of structure planning and rezoning proposals), rather than the traditional focus on 'resulting impact' issues such as noise and vibration. In particular, the policy could provide direction for appropriate and compatible land uses in close proximity to operational port zones, informing amendments to local planning schemes and subsequent development proposals. The focus should be on ensuring more appropriate land uses in the first instance – so that impact amelioration issues are ultimately avoided or minimised.





Recognition of Freight Corridors Within the Metropolitan Region Scheme

The DOT's *Perth Freight Transport Network Plan* (currently under development) is anticipated to provide a clear regional approach to land use and transport planning, including the need for strong freight corridor and node protection. In this context, consideration could be given to amending the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) so that strategic freight corridors are formally designated within the MRS and subsequently regional and local planning schemes.

State Planning Policy 5.4: Road and Rail Transport Noise and Freight Considerations in Land Use Planning

The Department of Planning is currently undertaking a review of the existing SPP No.5.4 Guidelines, located here: [Link.](#) The review is anticipated to cover the following elements:

- Make improvements to the layout and graphics of the document to make it more user-friendly, including the separation of policy provisions and technical guidance; and
- Provide good practice examples.

There may be an opportunity to develop an assessment template for local and state government planners in the application of *SPP No.5.4 provisions*. This template, or checklist, would assist in identifying the key elements that should be addressed as part of a planning proposal (be it scheme amendment, structure plan or development application).

Liveable Neighbourhoods Review

Liveable Neighbourhoods has been adopted by the WAPC as operational policy, and is to be followed in the design and approval of urban development. It is the WAPC's operational policy for the design and assessment of structure plans and subdivision for new urban areas in the metropolitan area and country centres. Whilst industrial land and freight corridors form a key part of these urban elements, they are insufficiently covered in the *Liveable Neighbourhoods* document. Further attention is needed as to how new urban communities and infill development relates to and interfaces with industrial areas and freight corridors.

In April 2013, the Department of Planning initiated a review of *Liveable Neighbourhoods*. As part of this review there is an opportunity to integrate the consideration of freight matters (such as the interface between residential and freight routes). The principles of *SPP 5.4* could be aligned as part of the *Liveable Neighbourhood* documents, providing a consistent approach, ensuring they are captured during the preparation and assessment of Local Structure Plans.

Guidance Through Local Government Planning Policy

It is important to provide a local context in the application of State Planning Policies. Local government planners have the opportunity to craft local planning policies that consider freight corridors and industrial land destinations in their locality; addressing the specific spatial, land use, and built form attributes of their local environment. This approach should be encouraged.

There are already examples of local authorities preparing guidance in this regard, including the City of Gosnell's guidance note relating to SPP No.5.4. This is an assessment tool to assist in determining whether, and to what extent, subdivision and development proposals are affected by the provision of SPP No.5.4.

Further information:

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Prepared and published by TPG Town Planning, Urban Design and Heritage



TOWN PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND HERITAGE

REFERENCES:

Department of Transport, 2013. Western Australian Regional Freight Transport Network Plan.

Ports Australia & Sprott Planning & Environment, 2014. Leading Practice: Port & Supply Chain Protection...Current Practices & Future Opportunities