



FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mr Reece Waldock
Director General of Transport
140 William Street
Perth WA 6000

Dear Reece

Freight Rail Noise

You would recall that an issue on the Council's work programme is to progress the reduction of freight rail noise at source by 'on-track' and 'near-track' means. We have progressed the issue to the point where representatives of all above-rail operators and below-rail track owners and lessees in this State met this week under my Chairmanship to find ways to address it. The Departments of Transport and Planning were also represented at the meeting.

At the outset of the meeting, the point was made that this is a 'brownfields' problem whose solutions are operational. It is not a 'greenfields' problem, ie a land use planning policy problem, that can be addressed by appropriate requirements for setbacks, construction practices and other measures. As you know, the Council has put related views forward to the current review of State Planning Policy 5.4.

The NSW Government has been successfully addressing freight rail noise in 'brownfields' situations. Rachel Johnson, whom you know, oversaw that process in Sydney under the banner of the 'Strategic Noise Action Plan' (SNAP). We brought Rachel across to WA to assist with this week's meeting and she made an invaluable contribution by describing the process in NSW and the learnings from it. Her key messages were:

- From the start of the SNAP process, industry was completely and genuinely engaged in understanding the problem and finding solutions.
- There was equal ownership of the issue across Government (Transport, Planning, Environment, Health, etc) with commensurate preparedness to resource appropriate responses. (The commitment in NSW was a \$50 million programme over ten years.)
- The whole process was driven by both industry and Government.
- The key to industry becoming genuinely involved in the process was the seriousness with which Government regarded the issue, as indicated by the resources made available.
- The first stage of the process was to develop a full understanding of the problem - its significance, location and specific practical causes – through data collection and analysis.
- The second stage was to develop solutions to the identified causes, involving above and below rail initiatives and, where these were inadequate, a modest carefully targeted programme of residential building improvement adjacent to freight rail corridors.
- All solutions were subject to a cost-benefit analysis by both industry and Government.
- This remains an ongoing programme that addresses new problems as they arise through the industry-Government structure that was established.

- The issue was first raised in the context of health concerns resulting from freight rail noise and subsequent duty of care implications for the Government. This created a high political imperative to address the problem.

Reflecting on the NSW experience, comment on how a similar response to the issue in this State might play out would include:

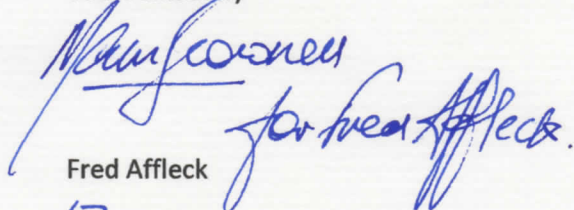
- While it appears there is no political imperative in WA yet, higher density residential development of the sort immediately adjacent to the freight rail corridor to and from Fremantle Port suggests that there will be in the relatively near future.
- The majority of above-rail operators in WA are national companies. Their close engagement with the NSW process sets a useful precedent for their involvement here and all have supported this.
- While the issue has implications across Government, primary carriage should be with the Transport portfolio and not Planning as this is a transport infrastructure management issue and not a land-use planning issue.
- The process could be overseen by a permanent committee comprising senior representatives of both industry and Government, chaired independently and resourced from within the Transport Portfolio. The Council would be prepared to play a role in this approach in the first instance. (The OSOM analogy is useful.)

A suggestion was made at the meeting that the issue in WA should be addressed through the existing structure that has been established to review State Planning Policy 5.4. We do not see this as appropriate because:

- This is not a greenfields land-use planning issue, but a brownfields operational one.
- As this is an operational issue and not a policy one, the necessary level of engagement by industry will only be achieved if the process is independent, with a leading role for industry, but with strong Government support.
- The response to this issue needs to be an ongoing one not confined to the timetable being followed by the review of State Planning Policy 5.4.

This is clearly a problem that demands action. The NSW experience suggests that with goodwill from industry and support from Government, it can be successfully addressed. The Council is keen to play a role in achieving that outcome.

Yours sincerely


Fred Affleck

13 /05/2016

Copy: Gail McGowan, Director General of Planning