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FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Mr Michael Deegan  
Infrastructure Coordinator  
Infrastructure Australia  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Deegan *Michael*

**National Land Freight Strategy**

Thank you on behalf of the Freight and Logistics Council of Western Australia for the opportunity to comment on the National Land Freight Strategy Discussion Paper, which was published by Infrastructure Australia in February of this year.

This Discussion Paper presents a useful picture of new directions for freight in this country. We agree there is a strong need to raise freight productivity in Australia and that this may prove impossible without changes to the basic infrastructure/regulatory context within which industry operates. We understand the logic of focussing on a tightly defined national land freight network within which to seek those changes. While many of the ideas in the document which break new ground will not be taken up by the industry and states in the short term, history suggests that articulating them clearly and repeatedly is part of the process required to gain incremental acceptance.

The weakness in the paper inevitably relates to implementation. The multi-layered processes and institutional arrangements through which Australians must work for innovation have limited capacity. States and local jurisdictions should be encouraged to take initiatives in strategic planning and regulatory reform, coming together when there are signs of willingness to collaborate.

You might be aware that Western Australia's Department of Transport, with the support of this Council, is well advanced on a Regional Freight Strategy that will identify a freight infrastructure network in Western Australia and how its use can be made most productive. This will be followed before the end of the year by work on an equivalent Metropolitan Freight Strategy. Western Australia will then be well placed to feed into deliberations on a national freight infrastructure network.

We have some reservations about future links identified for this State in the IA Discussion Paper, especially those connecting with the Pilbara. We acknowledge these are preliminary concepts only, and we look forward to reviewing them against the background of the work currently occurring here.

Our strong view is that collaboration between jurisdictions is absolutely critical to a positive outcome. At the end of the day, while the Commonwealth has at its disposal Federal infrastructure funds, it is the States that have the primary responsibility for decisions on the location and usage of new infrastructure.

A useful mechanism for extending collaboration at the State level of jurisdiction is through each State's freight council. As the current chair of the Australian Freight Council Network, Western Australia I would be pleased to facilitate any such discussions.

Before concluding this brief response, we would like to comment on the scope of the present exercise, as described in the Discussion Paper. The exercise started life as the National 'Freight' Strategy, an overview that we saw as important for Western Australia, given the potential for coastal shipping in this State. We understand this element is dealt with in the National Ports Strategy, but we are concerned that this potentially disjointed approach does not lead to a constrained view of the issue as happened, for example, in the Auslink process.

This Council is supportive of the directions sketched out by the Discussion Paper. We would like to maintain dialogue on the issue, especially as it relates to the several reservations we have raised here.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



Dr Fred Affleck  
Chairman

5/4/2011