



MEDIA RELEASE

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VTA rallies conference to support the North East Link

Victorian Transport Association (VTA) CEO Peter Anderson has used his opening address to the Association's annual State Conference at Lorne to rally 150 transport industry delegates and their employers to support construction of the North East Link, finally completing the long overdue connection of the Metropolitan Ring Road with the Eastern Freeway and/or EastLink.

"Productivity is clearly a major issue and challenge for operators and our members, so the VTA spends a lot of time and effort developing and influencing policy that can help our members to be as productive as they can possibly be," Mr Anderson said.

"There are many impediments and barriers to productivity encompassing things like workplace law and regulation, tax policy as it applies to fuel and other business costs, and of course congestion-busting infrastructure improvements and enhancements.

"Since our conference last year, the VTA has really accelerated its campaign and lobbying efforts around what we regard as the number one road infrastructure project for Victoria, the North East Link.

"As recently as February, we teamed up with the RACV to prosecute our case for the road, and that has resulted in a very consistent burst of activity that is starting to have an impact, and is flushing out commitment from legislators.

"For example, Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas has come out to say the project makes 'innate sense', Opposition Leader Matthew Guy has confirmed the road will feature in the transport policy they take to the election, and Infrastructure Australia and Infrastructure Victoria have included the connection in their own independent assessment on priority infrastructure for Melbourne.

"The VTA will continue to lobby for the project and it's really important for us to have the support of members and senior leaders in our industry," Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the VTA's rationale for so vocally backing the North East Link is quite simple:

1. It will result in massive productivity improvements for freight and logistics operators needing to get between the north and south east of Melbourne; and
2. It will take a significant amount of truck traffic off suburban roads in the area, making them safer for everyone.

"These will help operators to increase their revenue and to reduce their costs, with our own estimates suggesting up to 40 per cent heavy vehicles would be eliminated from suburban roads in the north east of Melbourne if the North East Link was built, Mr Anderson said.

"As well as improving the amenity for residents of those suburbs, this would improve productivity for the whole of Melbourne – not just freight operators – because of the immediate and stark reduction in congestion that would eventuate."



The connection would also mitigate the need for night curfews on trucks greater than 4.5 tonnes travelling between the Eastern Freeway and the Ring Road, which have only led to increased congestion on roads in the area during the day.

Mr Anderson told the conference the North East Link is not the only infrastructure the VTA supports.

“The Western Distributor project is proceeding at a rapid pace, and it’s encouraging to finally have a second Yarra crossing and better access for heavy vehicles to the Port of Melbourne on the not-to-distant horizon,” he said.

“In a boost for rail, the Commonwealth allocated almost \$600 million in its recent budget for Australian Rail Track Corporation to continue construction works and land acquisition for the Inland Rail freight corridor.

“And regional Victorian roads and bridges have also been earmarked for significant upgrades through funding from leasing the Port of Melbourne to be able to accommodate High Productivity Freight Vehicles.”

Mr Anderson said these and other important activities outlined in recent state and federal budgets were refreshing because small signs are starting to emerge of long-term and coordinated planning by governments and statutory authorities.

“Here in Victoria, we saw this with the outline of a 10-year Capital Planning Horizon which is an encouraging sign the government is adopting a visionary approach to infrastructure planning. Similarly, the Commonwealth’s enterprise tax plan commits to a 10-year plan for tax relief for small, medium and large business,” he said.

The theme for the VTA conference is ***Focus on Fundamentals – Tools for Success***.

“It’s a theme that evolved out of discussions earlier in the year, where we determined that operators and professionals working in transport, could benefit from hearing from a diverse range of speakers about the business fundamentals we need to get right for sustained success,” Mr Anderson said.

“The fundamentals I’m speaking of are revenue, cost, people, infrastructure, operations and the future.”

For the VTA, infrastructure is but one piece of the puzzle for an industry that directly and indirectly employs over three million Australians.

“I’m pleased to report the VTA and the VWMA has put over 1200 members of our industry in the last 12 months through short courses and certificate courses. Training is a big part of what we do, so we were particularly encouraged to receive a \$1 million grant for our Logistics Cadet Program in the 2016 Victorian Budget,” Mr Anderson said.

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