



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **VTA calls for better balance between community amenity and economic prosperity**

Victorian Transport Association CEO Peter Anderson has called for better balance between community amenity and economic prosperity from operators and the public in an address to an infrastructure conference in Melbourne today.

In wide-ranging remarks to the **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Victorian Infrastructure Conference**, Mr Anderson reinforced the immense contribution the freight and logistics industry makes to the economy throughout the supply chain, and that economic prosperity would decline if vocal groups were wholly-supported in their quest to eliminate heavy vehicles from certain roads.

“Trucks are vital to the economic lifeblood of communities, bringing trade to markets, goods to our shops and enhancing the standard of living we all enjoy,” Mr Anderson said.

“Trucks are essential for jobs, connection and growth. They are workplaces for normal family people who suffer every day with the vagaries of chaos, confusion and congestions on the roads.

“We need to harmonise the creation of new roads, the use of existing roads, integrate rail systems and ports and convince the community that transport is vital to our economy and way of life,” Mr Anderson said.

Restrictions on heavy vehicle movements and efforts to force them onto toll roads whose charges have risen by 125% was cited as two of the major challenges facing operators in and around Melbourne.

“Bans and curfews are becoming the common catchcry for local community groups that do not understand the importance to our standard of living in having trucks of all shapes and sizes move among us,” Mr Anderson said.

“The industry recognises the greater physical impact we have on roads and amenity, which is why we pay a disproportionately higher share of repair and maintenance costs via steeper registration and other user charges.

“This has been exacerbated recently by Transurban’s discriminatory increase of CityLink tolls for heavy vehicles by up to 125%, as compared to passenger vehicle increases linked to CPI. Attempts by community groups in the inner west to force trucks onto CityLink through outright bans could impact operators significantly and potentially force their closure or consolidation.

“There needs to be a recognition that blanket bans and curfews are not the answer, and that road sharing solutions that can be developed such as curfew exemptions for modern vehicles, enforcement solution through technology deployment, local road construction improvements, and toll reductions and discounts to encourage heavy vehicle usage.

“Banning trucks is the lazy way politicians of all stripes have dealt with groups who don’t like trucks because of their size or shape or noise or smell. What these groups don’t appreciate is that a truck ban is tantamount to an employment ban because you are restricting someone’s ability to do their job,” Mr Anderson said.

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The establishment of Infrastructure Victoria and other announcements from the Victorian Government are encouraging signs that freight industry and its contributions is being recognised.

“Infrastructure Victoria’s 30-year infrastructure strategy has worked well through the geographical priorities for Victorian infrastructure developments. There are some strong recommendations for Government to consider and it’s encouraging to have the start of a master plan successive governments can adopt,” Mr Anderson said.

“But we need more than plans. We need actions that encompass the movement of people, for work and leisure, and freight, for a strong economy and our prosperity. And this is where the issues of infrastructure planning converge.

“Of course, the big solution is the North East Link which we estimate will remove 30-40% of all truck movement through the Yarra tunnels move to the metropolitan ring road, and reduce truck movements through Melbourne’s suburban north-east.

“There are a number of route solutions that can be investigated and the newly North East Link Authority will do a very thorough job in determining the best route and provide qualified recommendations.

“The VTA favours a route continuous at grade, with no tunnels, that would see the Maroondah Highway turn into the Maroondah Freeway past Ringwood, linking Eastlink with the M80 without affecting the flows of the Eastern Distributor. It will see a freeway built through paddocks and semi-rural areas. There will be fewer truck movements through the suburbs of the north east keeping the big trucks on the big roads.”

Mr Anderson concluded by reinforcing the need for practical solutions that attempt to encompass all needs and wants

“Exclusion does not bring harmony or long term improvement. To realise practical solutions we need politicians and policymakers that get the necessity of our industry and are prepared to fight for it even in the face of loud opponents who may be their constituents,” he said.

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