



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **VTA calls for introduction of Victorian Freight Authority**

In opening remarks to the Victorian Transport Association's annual State Conference, chief executive officer Peter Anderson has called for the introduction of a Victorian Freight Authority to advise government on the unique requirements of the transport and logistics industries.

"The VTA has been advocating for policy that supports operators to be successful in business, whether it be new road, rail and port infrastructure to streamline the freight task, or new ways of operating to create efficiencies for various participants in the supply chain," Mr Anderson said.

"An example of this is our advocacy for a Victorian Freight Authority to provide government with the perspective of the transport industry when it comes to decisions impacting planning and development, roads and infrastructure, user charges, the environment, and other public policy matters.

"The requirements of operators need to be factored early on in decisions being made by regulators and legislators, which is why we are pushing for the creation of an authority like this to ensure your unique needs are being looked after," he said.

According to Mr Anderson, the past 12 months have seen cost increases impact supply chains everywhere, but especially for road transport operators.

"We've had infrastructure surcharge increases from all the stevedores in Melbourne and elsewhere around the country, road charges are increasing exponentially whether it be fuel and excises, registration, insurance and tolls, and the threat of industrial action throughout many sectors of the economy is arguably the greatest it's been for a long time, as we saw over Christmas at Webb Dock," Mr Anderson said.

"Indeed, the possibility of future super unions like we've seen with the merger of the CFMEU and MUA could have far-reaching negative impacts on employers and supply chains nationally."

Mr Anderson said there is a lot happening to put upward pressure on costs for operators.

"In year's gone past, operators would typically wear the increases rather than risk losing business to competitors. We need to shift this attitude and educate not only customers, but consumers as well, that increases in costs are going to be passed on through the supply chain, and ultimately to the end users of the goods transported by operators.

"If we don't do this there's a real risk that operators will not have cost recovery increases accepted and will therefore go under, which is not good for anyone," he said.

Mr Anderson said that elsewhere, community amenity continues to be a big issue for the VTA and one that the association discusses in many forums to help people understand logistics and supply chains, and be more receptive to heavy vehicles on our roads.

"We are getting closer to a really encouraging outcome with resident groups in the inner west of Melbourne near the port who for some time have been concerned about the impacts of heavy vehicle movements," Mr Anderson said.



“We’re working on a solution that will create a range of improvements and set new standards for driver training, instruction and vehicle emissions, and ultimately create better harmony between passenger and commercial road users.”

Mr Anderson the VTA continues to do much work to encourage better driver standards.

“The training and education programs we are running with the support of the Victorian Government have been warmly embraced by industry. Our Transition to Transport program is helping to educate new participants in the industry about the complexities of supply chain logistics, and our Driver Delivery program is helping to attract and train new drivers, and place them in paid employment,” he said.

Mr Anderson said heavy vehicle licensing and assessment is a key activity for the VTA, upon which outcomes of competency-based training including skills and attitude will see current processes reviewed to bring a higher standard of skill, and a lower driving age for heavy vehicle drivers in our industry.

“The system we have now does not reflect the standards of safety, skill and competency the industry and the community now demands. These processes have not been reviewed to this scale for decades and we are looking for Victoria to lead the way, with the full support of the transport industry,” he said.

Mr Anderson also talked about the volume of new road and rail infrastructure projects gaining speed in Victoria, which will provide some short-term pain and disruption, but ultimately much long-term gain.

“One of the biggest is the Metro Tunnel project which will increase rail capacity for passenger commuters in Melbourne, and help to ease congestion for the benefit of freight operators. Another is the Inland Rail project which will transform supply chains across the country.”

“And tomorrow we’ll hear from the heads of the state’s biggest road authorities about progress on the North-East Link and the West Gate Tunnel in a session devoted to planned infrastructure works and how they will help operators improve business efficiencies,” Mr Anderson said.

The VTA has been calling for new road projects for quite some time, especially in Victoria where a major new freeway hasn’t been built for over a decade.

“For a city like Melbourne that is adding nearly 2000 new residents a week, this is unacceptable,” Mr Anderson said.

“So, we look forward to helping create the conditions for new projects to get underway, and helping opposing groups working through differences so we can get the modern, safe and efficient transport networks we need for our industry and the broader economy to prosper.”

The VTA State Conference features the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, Keith Pitt, Victorian Roads Minister Luke Donnellan, shadow Victorian roads minister David Hodgett, and numerous other high-profile speakers. The conference finishes Tuesday.

**Ends...**

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