



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **VTA welcomes delegates to State Conference 2015**

**More than 150 transport industry representatives from business, government and statutory road, rail and port authorities have gathered in Lorne on Victoria's picturesque Great Ocean Road for the Victorian Transport Association's annual State Conference, under the theme of *Managing Your Costs*.**

VTA Chief Executive Officer Peter Anderson said he was thrilled so many delegates had taken time from their busy schedules to attend the conference and support the peak transport industry association.

"The VTA staff has been working around the clock over recent weeks to prepare for our conference," he told delegates in welcoming them to the Conference.

"We've assembled what we believe is a fabulous line up of highly-qualified, and extremely well-credentialed speakers from right across our industry to address you on the theme of *Managing Your Costs*.

"There are a number of notable speakers from the business community, government and industry regulators who will share their stories and practical tips on how we can all Manage our Costs, at a time when doing business, for the most part, is becoming more expensive, not less.

"And at the risk of singling out a few of today's speakers, it'll be particularly interesting to hear from Transurban's Gary West on Road Infrastructure Funding, especially in the context of the Western Distributor proposal for a second river crossing.

"Compliancy and safety management costs will be covered in a session later today featuring among others, National Transport Commission CEO Paul Retter, and David Galbally, one of our top legal minds, a Partner with Madgwicks Lawyers and Independent Chairman of our major sponsor, TWUSUPER," he said.

In framing the Conference and reflecting on his first six months as VTA CEO, Mr Anderson told delegates that transport and transportation networks are the glue that holds our state and national economies together.

"Without them, people would be unable to get to work, goods would be unable to get to market, and commerce as we know it would suffer," he said.

"Elected and unelected policy makers for the most part do understand this, as reflected by ongoing investment in the maintenance of existing road, rail and port networks, along with the occasional investment in big ticket new infrastructure projects to keep pace with our growing economy and our larger fleets of large and small trucks and buses, trains and ships."



Mr Anderson said the challenge for the transport industry is to help policy makers prioritise the roads and infrastructure spending that is needed most, and that will most benefit transport operators in the form of better roads and connectivity, integrated rail networks, and investment in key ports to accommodate the ships of the future.

“Ultimately it is mainstream consumers who will reap the benefits of smarter infrastructure spending, in the form of cheaper goods, safer roads and driving conditions, and faster access to locally produced and imported products,” he said.

“They will also benefit from less road congestion, which is what we in Melbourne and Victoria are desperate for in order to create the greater transport efficiencies that will improve productivity, and help grow our state and national economies.”

Mr Anderson told delegates if ever there was a hot button issue in Victoria at the moment it is transport.

“A day rarely passes when the VTA isn’t asked to comment or react on the radio or in the newspapers about transport infrastructure related matters, such as grade separations and level crossings, freeway or tollway maintenance and improvements, the East-West Link, Transurban’s proposed Western Distributor, or any of the many other proposals to get our roads moving.

“All of this is fuelled by the clear reality that congestion on our roads is a source of massive frustration for drivers of all modes of transport, and in the absence of a “shovel-ready”, big-ticket road project, transport operators – and business more generally – are desperate for something significant to be built soon.”

Mr Anderson said while the VTA is not a political organisation, it has a legitimate role in helping politicians to deliver outcomes that will help the industry and improve the economy.

“Regrettably, transport and infrastructure has become something of a political football in Victoria as a consequence of the East-West project not proceeding and persistent question marks over federal funding that was earmarked for that road,” he said.

“Our message to state and federal government is to please put politics aside and initiate a roads project very soon that provides genuine solutions to our major transport bottlenecks.”

Mr Anderson said a northern road linking the Metropolitan Ring Road to the Eastern Freeway is the number one big-ticket priority road project for the VTA.

“That connection is vital to connect heavy transport vehicles from Melbourne’s south east through to the new Epping wholesale fruit and vegetable market in the north, and then on to other roads of national significance, to the west and north, like the Hume Highway.

“We are encouraged the RACV also has that missing link as its number one priority, and we will continue to prosecute our case for that connection to be made.”



Mr Anderson said the sad thing about some of the road and infrastructure bottlenecks in Victoria is that it means the state is lagging behind others.

“This is where deliberations around the sale of the Port of Melbourne are absolutely critical for Victoria’s competitiveness,” he said.

“So much of the infrastructure spending in the Victorian Budget is tied to port sale proceeds. At the same time, the competitiveness of that port in a national context hinges on a fair sale outcome that does not discourage competitiveness. We urge all parties to proceed very carefully in a way that maximises sale proceeds but not at the expense of port operators and their ability to compete.”

Mr Anderson said told delegates there were many positive things happening in the transport industry.

“Since taking on the CEO role I have been so encouraged and impressed with the leadership position from our members in areas like people management, supply chain management, occupational health and safety, training, and embracing technology to realise efficiency and productivity gains,” he said.

“I have also been really impressed with the partnership approach we continue to take with state and national regulatory authorities to advance critical workplace health and safety issues and other matters.

“We’ve just completed a hugely successful series of forums in regional Victoria where representatives from VicRoads, VicTrack, WorkSafe, the Victoria Police, TWUSUPER and the VTA were able to address around 150 transport operators on a wide range of issues. Interest from regional operators is as strong as ever because they understand the health of our industry and its workers is vital for their businesses to grow and prosper,” he said.

Mr Anderson said he had been struck by the pride that freight and transport operators have, not just in their individual businesses and staff, but in the industry as a whole.

“For the most part they embrace their responsibility as employers to initiate programs that can reduce fatigue, improve vehicle safety management and performance, provide opportunity for workers and generally work to improve the image of our industry,” he said.

“As an industry we have worked hard to improve our image and reputation in the community through instituting regular training and driver education programs, participating in community forums about road safety and congestion, and advocating all the good things we are doing to improve safety and enshrining a sharing the road culture, not just among truck drivers but among all road users.

“These programs are vital to reducing costs for transport operators, as are more tangible things like improving vehicle efficiency and improving our supply chains to find savings. They also demonstrate the accountability our industry is actively adopting as a good corporate and community citizen,” he said.

**Ends...**

**For further information or interview please contact Brian O’Neil on 0411 055 284.**