



MEDIA RELEASE

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VTA CEO addresses Victorian Transport Infrastructure Conference

Victorian Transport Association CEO Peter Anderson has highlighted the urgent need for better coordination and fewer jurisdictional impediments between state and Commonwealth transport bodies and regulators to produce the infrastructure for a prosperous and growing economy.

Mr Anderson told delegates at the *7th Victorian Transport Infrastructure Conference* that it is important for policy makers to prioritise and think about intermodal connectivity when making decisions about infrastructure planning and spending.

“By intermodal connectivity, I mean linking the ships that carry containerised and bulk goods to trucks and trains, which then use appropriate roads and railways to get those goods to their customers, and to end users,” Mr Anderson said.

“Underpinning all of that is the need for modern and efficient road, rail and ports infrastructure that can carry these goods quickly and safely. This is where state and commonwealth policy makers need to more closely work together developing a clear, long-term vision.”

Mr Anderson said there are historical impediments in Victoria that make it difficult and time-consuming to transfer goods between our major ports areas and on to open roads and railway networks.

“Port of Melbourne access roads are massively unsuited to the sizes and volumes of heavy vehicles that need to use them. And while we are encouraged by progress on the West Gate Distributor and the proposed Western Distributor project, completion is a long way off.

“Similarly with rail, there are impediments at our ports to getting more freight onto trains instead of trucks. As revolutionary as the new Webb Dock terminal will be, it is regrettable that rail networks cannot access the terminal, meaning containers must be transported on trucks.”

HPFV's vital for reducing congestion

Mr Anderson told the conference two key things needed to happen to alleviate traffic congestion.

“Fewer trucks will help ease congestion, but the only way to achieve this is to allow High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFV) that can carry heavier load. We then need a fully connected road infrastructure system that can accommodate these freight vehicles of the future, and mitigate heavy vehicles having to use inner city and suburban streets.

“Inevitably, regulatory hurdles will need to be overcome to enable these larger and longer vehicles to use the roads. And then there is the matter of the road infrastructure itself being able to physically accommodate High Productivity Freight Vehicles, which needs to be factored into the design of new roads and bridges.”



Mr Anderson said overcoming these hurdles will require coordination and discourse between state and national regulatory bodies.

“Throughout this coordination, it will be helpful if the various jurisdictions have a uniform and long-term vision for road and rail infrastructure that is modern, safe, efficient and fully-connected.

“We need to aspire to world’s best practice when planning our future infrastructure needs. We need a plan that accommodates the big picture, and is not constrained by election cycles and jurisdictional duplication,” Mr Anderson said.

North East Link needed to complete the ring

In renewing the VTA’s push for a northern road linking the Metropolitan Ring Road to the Eastern Freeway, Mr Anderson described Melbourne’s road network as a “disjointed mish-mash of new and old roads that lead everywhere and nowhere at the same time.”

“The consequence of this is that heavy vehicles that should be on free-flowing, dual lane freeways, instead end up on inner city and suburban roads, not out of choice, but out of necessity,” he said.

“The North East Link connecting the Metropolitan Ring Road to the Eastern Freeway is vital to get the heavy transport vehicles from the south east through to the new Epping market, and then on to other roads of national significance to the west and north, like the Hume Highway.

“The VTA is encouraged the RACV also has the North East Link as its priority road project, and we will continue to prosecute our case for that connection to be made,” he said.

Public transport and rail freight critical

Mr Anderson told the conference public transport options and increased use of rail freight were critical for reducing congestion.

“It is self-evident that more public transport capacity and options will act as an incentive for less private vehicle road. The VTA and road transport operators absolutely support greater public transport options, because heavy vehicles have no choice but to use the roads,” he said.

“We also welcome projects like the inland railway linking Melbourne and Brisbane and the Victorian Government’s investment in SCT Logistics’ Wodonga rail hub because it helps to spread the freight task between modes of transport, creates transport efficiencies.

“This does not mean we see a future devoid of heavy vehicles trucks because the clear reality is that while trains and ships carry freight, only trucks can deliver,” he said.



Coordinating stakeholders to move in step the challenge

Mr Anderson said the attainment of better state and national economic indicators is a key priority for the VTA on behalf of its members.

“Government, industry and community stakeholders, for the most part understand that we need a productive and efficient freight transport system to keep growing our economies,” he said.

“Our challenge as freight transport industry advocates is to coordinate stakeholders to move in step with each other, so that we get transport outcomes that will more productively and efficiently move freight.”

Mr Anderson said the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator is doing great work to benefit freight operators, and is a model for overcoming jurisdictional impediments to advancing vital infrastructure projects.

“The NHVR is encouraging better transport efficiencies through the administration of one set of laws for heavy vehicles, and delivering many services under one regulator, with one rulebook.

“In the spirit of reducing jurisdictional impediments and red tape, the VTA believes this should be a Commonwealth body, not state-based.”

Mr Anderson emphasised that for all the challenges freight operators face, it is a great time to be working in the transport industry.

“So long as there is consumerism, there will always be a need for getting goods from producers and manufacturers to end users, which will require a combination of air, sea, rail and road freight,” he said.

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