



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

2009

Local Roads and Transport Congress

Agenda

Introduction

Transport is critically important to the social, cultural, and economic well being of every Australian community, from our city centres to remote communities. With the freight and passenger transport task expected to more than double in the 20 years to 2020 getting transport right is more important than ever.

Local government is the level of government closest to the community and plays an essential role, in partnership with other levels of government and the community, to ensure that the nation's transport system including the 'last and first mile' is capable of meeting the anticipated transport challenges over the next several decades.

Roads represent the single largest item of expenditure for most councils, especially in regional areas. Local roads that are the responsibility of councils make up more than 80% of the total road length in Australia. The National Transport Commission has estimated that some 18% of kilometres traveled by vehicles over 4.5 tonnes and 28% of commercial kilometres are on local roads.

In urban areas the need for improved public transport systems and linkages to local communities are key issues. In regional areas the need to have effective linkages to the arterial road system, ports and mines is a priority, along with improved public transport (bus) services both within and between towns to provide public transport options for people traditionally reliant on private vehicles. For some councils, the funding of airports and the provision of efficient air services are major concerns.

A Local Roads and Transport Strategy

Local government has developed a strong relationship with the Federal Government over many years that sees the Federal Government providing more than \$2.5 billion in 2009-10 to local government, of which about one third is earmarked for roads. However the relationship between local government and the Federal Government cannot be measured just by the number of dollars provided by the Federal Government. Local government's approach to working with the Federal Government is much more than money.

Our engagement with the Federal Government is guided by an agreed strategy that was developed following the 2006 National Local Roads and Transport Congress endorsed by the ALGA Board and launched at the 2006 National General Assembly. The strategy provides a practical framework within which the ALGA Board can lobby the Federal Government and deal with issues as they emerge, such as local road funding, heavy vehicle standards, new freight efficient vehicles, public transport issues and community infrastructure. The ALGA Local Roads and Transport Strategy 2006-16 can be found on the ALGA website at

<http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/transport/transportstrategy/>.

Achievements

Under the existing strategy local government has been successful in pursuing major transport initiatives. Major achievements flowing from the lobbying effort by ALGA on behalf of local government include:

- Roads to Recovery extended to 2014 at an increased rate of \$350 million per year worth \$1.75 billion;
- Federal involvement in the funding of urban rail projects; th
- \$40 million for bike paths;
- \$150 million for railway level crossing upgrading
- \$1 billion Regional and Community Infrastructure Program;
- \$25 million Local Government Reform fund;
- Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government;
- Recognition of the needs of local “last and first mile” in road transport reforms including a local government targeted communication strategy by the National Transport Commission;
- Regional airports security funding: \$42.9 million over four years;
- Subsidies for weekly flights to remote regions: \$44.7 million over four years; and
- \$3 million for a Remote Aviation Infrastructure Fund

Rationale

The current strategy has served local government well but with the change of Government and its different transport funding and planning focus, Global Financial Crisis and the Government’s fiscal balance, there is a need to review and update the strategy.

The Rudd Government has taken a radically different approach to transport funding and planning with a greater direct involvement in the urban agenda and public transport. It has established Infrastructure Australia and the Major Cities Unit to help guide its funding decisions. Importantly, the current Government has continued the previous government’s move towards mass distance charging for heavy vehicles. The Henry Review of Taxation has examined the issue of road pricing and has issued a discussion paper [A Conceptual Framework for the Reform of Taxes Related to Roads and Transport by Harry Clarke and David Prentice] on the topic.

A further significant development is the High Court decision in *Pape v Commissioner of Taxation* which brings into question the constitutional validity of the federal government providing funding directly to local government through programs such as the Roads to Recovery.

We need to be in a position to influence the Government’s thinking and to be ready to respond as policies are developed. To do that, any new strategy needs to recognise the changes in the policy landscape and to adapt to those changes. This approach does not mean giving up objectives, such as permanent funding for local roads, but it may mean different approaches to achieving those objectives.

To assist the ALGA Board in its negotiations with the Federal Government, an updated framework on transport issues is needed.

Development of a local roads and transport strategy

A local government roads and transport strategy MUST reflect the needs and interests of local government and local communities and be informed by current events/ policy settings.

The current Local Government Roads and Transport Strategy has five key themes:

- Local road funding and management;
- Urban transport;
- Mobility and access for regional Australians;
- Freight management; and
- Long term financial sustainability of local government.

With the changing domestic and world economic environment local government faces a range of new challenges. Some of these challenges are outlined below:

Local road funding and management

Objective: Permanent funding arrangements for local roads

- In light of the High Court decision in Pape should local government rely on grant funding? What are other options to secure funding?
- Would constitutional recognition help to secure funding?
- If funding were to be directed through state governments what can be done to ensure the funding is passed on in full?
- What is a fair funding level? How can it be maintained in real terms?
- What are the threats and opportunities of roads user charging?
- How to meet the data needs for local government to present its case to government?
- How to better involve the private sector in the provision and funding of road infrastructure?
- What does local government need to improve the managements of the roads and other assets?

Urban transport and Congestion

Objective: Transport systems that improve urban amenity and freight efficiency and to provide viable alternatives to the private motor vehicle.

- How to involve all three levels of government in future land use planning including integration of city wide, regional and national transport planning?
- How to meet the transport needs of a growing population (estimated to be 35 million by 2049)?
- How to balance the needs of industry and urban amenity?
- What role can cycling play as means of urban public transport?
- What are possible future roles for councils in providing transport to the disadvantaged eg community buses and how should they be funded?
- How can bipartisan support for Commonwealth funding of public transport be achieved?

- How can the public transport experience be improved for users?
- What are the possible impacts (costs and revenues) on local government to changes to accessible parking arrangements?
- What are the possible impacts of disability legislation on transport infrastructure provision?
- How can councils prepare for peak oil or future oil price spikes?
- Impact of the Carbon Pollution Trading Scheme on transport?
- Should there be congestion charging and how should it work?

Mobility and access for regional Australian

Objective: Equitable access, particularly to essential services, for all regional communities

- How can regional communities be provided with better access to public transport?
- What are the mobility and access issues for indigenous communities?
- How can communities in regional and remote Australia prepare for peak oil or future oil price spikes?
- What is the future role of country rail passenger services?
- What is the future role of country rail freight services?
- What is the future role of rail in the transport of bulk commodities, eg grain?
- How can country and regional aviation services be improved?
- Is there scope for rationalization of regional airports?
- What has been the impact of the transfer of airport ownership to councils?
- What is the impact of the centralisation of services (ie medical, government and business) in regional centres?
- Is improving broadband access in regional and remote areas an alternative to improving physical access?
- How can mobile phone coverage in regional and remote areas be improved?

Road safety

Objective: Reducing road deaths and serious injuries on local roads

- What is the role of local government in road safety?
- What are the road safety issues specific to urban areas?
- What are the road safety issues specific to regional and remote areas?
- How can local government improve the safety of rail level crossings on local roads?
- Local government response to proposals under Safe Systems to speed limits as follows:

Road and section types combined with road users	Target Safe System speed (km/h)
Roads and sections used by cars and vulnerable users	30
Intersections with possible side-on conflicts between cars	50
Roads with possible frontal conflicts between cars	70
Roads with no possible frontal or side-on conflicts between vehicles and no vulnerable road users present	≥100

Freight management

Objective: Efficient movement of freight through local communities in a way that recognizes community concerns for safety and amenity

- How can the full potential of rail be realized?
- How to fully assess the impact of rail closures on road systems?
- How to improve the efficiency of freight logistics chains while recognizing the safety and environmental wishes of local communities?
- If roads need to be upgraded to accommodate freight efficient vehicles who should be responsible for the cost of upgrading?
- How to extend the use of freight efficient vehicles?
- Is local government supportive of the use of freight efficient vehicles?
- How can a consistent approach between councils to freight efficient vehicles be achieved?
- How to ensure that any approach to road user charging for heavy vehicles treats local roads equitably?

Long term financial sustainability of local government

Objective: Long term financial sustainability of local road and transport systems.

- How to ensure long term funding for local transport infrastructure?
- Is road user pricing a more effective mechanism for ensuring ongoing road funding compared to grants?
- Is there cost shifting happening in relation to local government transport systems?

Conclusion

The way local government addresses current transport challenges is critical to the ongoing development of the national roads and transport system. Transport is vitally important to the social, cultural, and economic well being of every Australian community. The 2009 National Local Road and Transport Congress is your opportunity to shape the future. We welcome and thank all those councils and councilors who have already registered to attend the Congress and urge other councils and councilors to consider registering if you have not already done so.