



MAYORAL REPORT

21st July 2005

MM1	NATIONAL LOCAL ROADS & TRANSPORT CONGRESS
	FILE: * KJF

SUMMARY:

Reporting on attendance at the National Local Roads and Transport Congress.



The National Local Roads and Transport Congress was held in Launceston from 3 to 5 July 2005. I represented Council, accompanied by the Director Shire Services. This was the sixth such Congress, which was convened by local government to discuss, plan and fight for transport needs of our communities. The Congress provides a national focus for local roads issues, guides the development of local government policy and shapes our advocacy at a national level.

Delegates were welcomed by the Mayor, Alderman Janie Dickensen, who noted that Launceston was the third oldest city in Australia.

The welcome by the President of the L.G.A. of Tasmania, Councillor Lynn Mason, highlighted the issues facing Tasmania, the major ones being intermodel issues with ports and the conflict of timber trucks and tourists. A marked increase in tourism has created a major impact on the island's narrow roads and increased concern for the bridges, as Tasmania has more bridges per lane kilometre of road than any other State!

A.L.G.A. President, Councillor Paul Bell, reiterated the massive road maintenance backlog still existing across Australia, which was estimated at \$344m after the Roads to Recovery Programme. He urged a local government response, based on an Australia-wide strategy, with increased community awareness, a key responsibility of local government. A national roads and transport strategy should be based on 4 key elements:

- (a) long-term certainty for local road funding;

- (b) strengthening partnerships across all spheres of government to address areas of specific need;
- (c) greater Federal involvement in sustainable transport; and
- (d) assistance to build local government capacity in data and asset management.

The Plenary address from Acting Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson, MP, Minister for Transport and Regional Services, confirmed the need for Councils to sell the benefits of the Roads to Recovery (R2R) Programme and the extension, R2R2, as a positive impact on local roads. It was essential to demonstrate that the money was used wisely and provided direct benefits to the community. It would appear that local governments will have to fight for a further extension to R2R3! The Acting Prime Minister seemed pleased with his impacts with regard to the R2R programme and was very relaxed – his efforts were recognised and lauded by the delegates.

The Keynote Address "Road Funding – Where to Next?", by Professor David Hensher, Director of the Institute of Transport Studies at the University of Sydney, offered a new charging regime across the country, based on distance and axle load. Fuel taxes were becoming inappropriate as road damage increased linearly with axle load and, with cleaner vehicles and hybrid vehicles, etc, may lead to a reduction in tax income, with an increase in road damage.

Papers were also presented on:

- "Auslink – How will it work?" – R2R2 is one of 6 points in the Bill
- "Asset Management" – the best way to determine the backlog and future priorities
- "Austroads – Helping Local Government" – detailing the information available

followed by a workshop on the issues, with extensive discussion and debate.

Day 2 saw a Plenary Address by the Hon. Jim Lloyd, MP, Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, who spoke of the benefits of the R2R2 programme and the likelihood of R2R3. He also launched the revised "Sealed Local Roads Manual", which provides guidelines to good practice in design, construction maintenance and rehabilitation of pavements.

The Keynote Address was "The Safer Roads Programme" by Lachlan McIntosh, Executive Director, Australian Automobile Association, reinforcing the need for safer drivers in safer vehicles on safer roads and urging Councils to provide safer vehicles for staff and find funding for road improvements. Some 40% reduction in road deaths and road accidents will result from improvements to roadways!

Concurrent sessions provided delegates the opportunity for up-to-date information on issues of special interest to metropolitan or regional/rural Councils. Brian Candler, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Aviation Association of Australia, provided some interesting but frightening statistics on Regional Aviation.

In the 1993-2003 decade;

- regional passenger numbers had decreased by 20%
- 96 communities had lost services
- regional growth with RPT was 1.4 times faster than without RPT
- structural unemployment was greater with RPT
- smaller communities were suffering
- there had been a steep decline in licensed maintenance workshops and this trend was likely to continue
- the average age of commercial pilots was 48 years
- the average age of aircraft engineers was 54 years.

He concluded by saying airports were cost centres in regional and small communities and should not be reviewed as profit-making businesses.

Stephen Lucas, Chairman, Bus Industry Confederation, noted that buses carry 1 billion passengers annually and warranted more support. Better bus transport increased access, reduced car dependency, particularly for the young and also the aged. However, some services were hard to be viable and regional public transport had been left in the lurch. Limited public transport limits education, employment and social opportunities, which could lead to social exclusion and has proven to have an impact on youth suicide.

Andrew Tongue, Executive Director, Office of Transport Security, Department of Transport and Regional Services, heightened delegate awareness of the threat of terrorism. Australia was the fourth terrorist target after the USA, UK and Israel.

Transport hubs were prime targets, as they attract both numbers of people, with a broad cross-section of the community and any disruption will have a large impact over a prolonged period. Measures at airports and harbours needed tightening and had been assessed on both threat (potential harm) and risk (measured in terms of consequence).

The discussion and debate following the speakers lead to an 11 point communiqué, which is attached at [Appendix A](#).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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J A C Hayes
Mayor