



Australian Government

Department of Transport and Regional Services

**SUBMISSION 23**

File Reference: SP2006/0041  
Contact: Fred Leftwich

Ms Sharon Bryant  
Inquiry Secretary  
Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration  
Department of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bryant

### **Inquiry into Australia's manufacturing industry now and beyond the resources boom**

Thank you for your letter of 11 July 2006 inviting the Department of Transport and Regional Services to make a submission to the Inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration into Australia's manufacturing industry now and beyond the resources boom. I apologise for the delay in replying to you.

The Department recognises the key role of the manufacturing industry and the significant contribution it makes to the Australian economy. Indeed, the wide range of activities undertaken by the Department contributes both directly and indirectly to supporting transport services for the manufacturing industry within Australia. In particular, the responsibilities of the Department cover a wide range of activities that contribute to the safe and efficient operation of the transport sector.

To assist the Committee's work, I am highlighting a couple of major areas where significant contributions are currently being made to the capacity of the transport sector and to regional communities through Australian Government policies and initiatives.

#### **AusLink**

AusLink is the Australian Government's policy for improved planning and accelerated development of Australia's land transport infrastructure. It will revolutionise the planning and funding of Australia's national roads, railways and inter-modal terminals by taking a long-term, strategic approach to future transport and industry needs. AusLink is supported by a \$15 billion program of Australian Government investment over the five year period 2004-05 to 2008-09 together with partnering funding from State and Territory Governments and the private sector.

The AusLink (National Land Transport) Act 2005 sets out the eligibility criteria for projects under the various elements of the AusLink programme – AusLink National projects, AusLink Transport Development and Innovation projects, AusLink funding for research entities, AusLink Strategic Regional projects, AusLink Black Spot projects and the AusLink Roads to Recovery programme.

Further information is available in the attached White Paper and the media release titled "AusLink commitment now \$15 billion following \$2.4 billion boost for road and rail".

## **Regional Partnerships**

The Australian Government works in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions. Through its Regional Partnerships Program, the Government seeks to strengthen growth and opportunities by investing in projects that provide greater opportunities for economic and social participation in the community; as well as assisting in structural adjustment by investing in projects that assist specifically identified communities and regions adjust to major economic, social or environmental change. Further information is available in the attached media released titled “Changes to make Regional Partnerships stronger”.

While the Department will not be making a formal written submission to the inquiry, we would be happy to make available senior officers of the Department to provide further information to the secretariat on areas that can assist the committee in its deliberations. If you have any queries, Mr Fred Leftwich, Senior Policy Adviser, Strategic Projects, can be contacted on 02 6274 8061 or [fred.leftwich@dotars.gov.au](mailto:fred.leftwich@dotars.gov.au), and should be the first point of contact.

Yours sincerely

Mike Mrdak  
Deputy Secretary

August 2006

# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Jim Lloyd MP**

Minister for Local Government,  
Territories and Roads



09 May 2006

001TRS/BUDGET Joint

## Joint Media Statement

**The Hon Jim Lloyd MP**

Minister for Local Government,  
Territories and Roads

**The Hon Warren Truss MP**

Minister for Transport and Regional  
Services

## **AUSLINK COMMITMENT NOW \$15 BILLION FOLLOWING \$2.4 BILLION BOOST FOR ROAD AND RAIL**

The Australian Government will provide an extra \$2.4 billion for roads and rail projects (in 2005-06), bringing to \$15.0 billion its total funding commitment to land transport including AusLink, the National Land Transport Plan, for 2004-05 to 2008-09.

The Australian Government Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Warren Truss said an injection of \$2.4 billion will be paid to states, territories and local councils and the Australian Rail Track Corporation this financial year in recognition of the critical importance of transport infrastructure to the nation and is available to be spent immediately.

"This money is delivering on the Australian Government's strategic long-term vision to fund priority projects that support nation building. In implementing AusLink, we are moving Australia from a parochial and ad-hoc system for funding roads and railways towards a national plan that all governments and industry can support," he said.

### **Highlights**

Highlights of the additional funding include:

- \$800.0 million for the Hume Highway duplication to allow all but three short sections of the highway totalling 20 km to be converted to four lanes by the end of 2009;
- \$160.0 million extra for the Pacific Highway in New South Wales, to be matched by the New South Wales Government, increasing to \$1.3 billion the new joint programme of works for duplicating the Sydney-Brisbane coastal highway;
- a further \$48.0 million to be added to the \$80.0 million already

allocated for flood immunity works on the Bruce Highway at Tully and \$220.0 million for a range of improvements to the highway between Townsville and Cairns. This will enable the highway to withstand better the tests of nature, such as heavy rains and cyclones;

- \$323.0 million to Western Australia's Great Northern, Great Eastern and Eyre highways. The upgrades will make the roads wider and safer - suitable to the mining industry and other heavy vehicle traffic they carry;
- \$100.00 million to South Australia for upgrading the Sturt Highway between Gawler and Nurioopta to better serve movement of freight between the Riverlands and the Port of Adelaide;
- \$60.0 million to Tasmania to rehabilitate and widen the East Tamar Highway linking Launceston and Bell Bay;
- \$30.0 million to bring forward additional construction on flood mitigation works for the Victoria Highway across the Victoria River floodplain in the Northern Territory, to better enable it to withstand the tests of nature, including heavy seasonal rains or events such as Cyclone Monica;
- \$270.0 million extra to the Australian Rail Track Corporation to invest in the interstate rail network to allow heavier freight trains to operate faster and increase their competitiveness with road transport, on the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane corridor.

In addition to these amounts, Mr Truss said the Australian Government would provide an extra one-off \$307.5 million in 2005-06 to local, state and territory governments for investing in local roads.

"The share of funding each council receives is the same as applies already under the Roads to Recovery Programme and, in effect, doubles the amount of money the Australian Government is making available for local road improvements in 2005-06.

"It is available to be spent in the period to June 2009, together with the normal Roads to Recovery allocation councils receive. All projects for this funding will be selected by councils," Mr Truss said.

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## Media Contacts

Fiona Telford ( Mr Lloyd's Office )      02 6277 7060

Kylie Butler ( Mr Truss' Office )      02 6277 7680 / 0403 141 300

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URL:

[http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/jl/releases/2006/May/001trs\\_budget\\_jl.htm](http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/jl/releases/2006/May/001trs_budget_jl.htm)



# Warren Truss

Attachment B

Minister for Transport and Regional Services  
Deputy Leader of The Nationals

M E D I A R E L E A S E

DOTARS05/051WT

15 November 2005

## Changes to make *Regional Partnerships* stronger

The Australian Government's delivery of regional services funding will be streamlined, and the role of local advisory committees strengthened, through changes to the *Regional Partnerships* program announced today by the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Warren Truss.

Mr Truss said the changes were aimed at making a good program even better.

"The *Regional Partnerships* program had been running for just on two years when I became Minister [in July], so it is timely to review its operation and see how we can make it even better."

"The changes will make the application process simpler and faster, and provide clearer guidance on what kind of projects will be approved.

"Department officers in the regions will work closely with local Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) to develop quality applications, which will then go through a single assessment process in Canberra.

"This streamlining will mean that any problems with project applications can be identified locally and dealt with quickly, and final decisions on projects will be made sooner," he said.

ACCs will receive annual letters identifying the Government's *Regional Partnerships* priorities and there will be wider consultation in the development of strategic plans.

Final decisions on projects would now be made by a committee of Ministers: Mr Truss; the Minister for Local Government Territories and Roads, Jim Lloyd; and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Gary Nairn.

Mr Truss said he also wanted to strengthen and develop the role of 56 Area Consultative Committees around Australia.

"The ACCs are a great resource, and we should be making more use of them to help in the delivery of a broad range of Australian Government programs, not just the *Regional Partnerships* program.

"From next year, the operational budget allocations for ACCs will be separated from the overall *Regional Partnerships* program allocation, and ACC budget will be provided as a three-year funding contract.

"This funding separation will make it easier for ACCs to attract and retain quality staff, to institute longer-term strategic plans, and to develop strategies to facilitate other Australian Government programs.

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"A review will be held into the boundaries of the ACCs and the Government will provide guidelines for the appointment of ACC members.

"These and other changes will reinforce the relationships between ACCs and local communities, improve access to a variety of government programs, and make it easier for regional communities to pursue projects to build economic and social capital.

"The *Regional Partnerships* program has already played a valuable role in building local communities, and I am confident that these changes will build on that success," Mr Truss said.

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**\*See attachment for details of changes and backgrounder for history of the *Regional Partnerships* program.**

## ***Regional Partnerships* program: measures announced on 15 November 2005**

Applications for *Regional Partnerships* program funding will no longer be assessed by Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) regional offices. DOTARS regional staff will work with local Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) to promote and facilitate the development of quality projects with local ACCs. There will be a single assessment of projects by DOTARS staff in Canberra, with a recommendation to Ministers.

ACCs will continue to rate nominated projects against the priorities identified in their strategic plans.

DOTARS will issue guidelines setting out the roles and responsibilities of regional office staff in relation to the development of RP projects, including clarification of the key criteria for project approval.

The Minister (for Transport and Regional Services) will provide written advice and guidelines each year to ACCs outlining the Government's broad policy priorities for the RP program, along the lines of that which is currently provided to the Research and Development Corporations.

Local communities and Local Members of Parliament will be consulted more extensively by ACC committees in the process of developing each ACC's strategic plan.

The Government, may from time to time, direct a pool of funds within the RP program for a specific investment priority which may not otherwise be brought forward by ACCs.

Greater emphasis will be placed on assessment of competitive neutrality issues associated with applications. Projects where assistance greater than \$25,000 is sought for a business or commercial venture will require a statement from the ACC chair that identifies any competitive neutrality risks posed by the project, prior to assessment of the project for funding approval.

Guidelines will be developed to clarify the role of Members and Senators in the development and sponsorship of projects to avoid any perception that their role reflects a political rather than electorate interest.

Funding approval will be subject to decision by a new committee comprising the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Minister for Local Government Territories and Roads, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. The Ministerial committee will also be responsible for developing and approving program guidelines and administrative arrangements.

Funding to meet the annual operating costs of ACCs, currently met from within funds appropriated to the RP program as a whole, will be separately identified and ACCs will be allocated funds in accordance with a three-year contract. The contract will give the ACCs greater capacity to facilitate other Australian Government programs, and to retain good quality staff. The operational funding appropriation for ACCs will be indexed within existing appropriations.

The Government will appoint the chair and deputy chair of each ACC, and provide guidelines for the appointment of other members to help committees to be representative of the communities they serve.

ACC boundaries will be reviewed to ensure boundaries of rural ACCs reflect areas of common interest, and consider whether the boundaries and number of metropolitan ACCs are appropriate.

### **BACKGROUNDER ATTACHED**

Contact:  
Ref:

Kylie Butler - Media Adviser  
Email: [kylie.butler@dotars.gov.au](mailto:kylie.butler@dotars.gov.au)

02 6277 7680      0417 652 488  
[www.ministers.dotars.gov.au](http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au)

## BACKGROUND

### **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**

The *Regional Partnerships* program is based on an approach of working with local communities to support them in implementing their ideas. The program was established in 2003 to assist Australia's communities to strengthen growth and opportunities, improve access to services, support planning and provide assistance for structural adjustment.

The *Regional Partnerships* program integrated several former regional funding programs, including rural Transaction Centres, the Dairy Regional Assistance Program, the Regional Solutions Program, the Regional Assistance Program and the existing structural adjustment programs for the Wide Bay Burnett (Qld), Namoi Valley (NSW), Weipa (Qld) and the South West Forests (WA) regions.

There is \$360.9 million available under the *Regional Partnerships* program from 2005-06 to 2008-09.

Since its inception in July 2003, more than \$170 million in funding under the *Regional Partnerships* program has been approved for over 750 community projects across Australia up to October this year.

Funding has been made available for non-profit organisations such as charities, community and indigenous councils, cooperatives, local government and state-funded agencies. Funding is also open to the private sector. Organisations seeking assistance can apply at any time rather than waiting for a round of funding.

The *Regional Partnerships* program has a partnership philosophy and has successfully leveraged three dollars from others for every dollar of funding the Australian Government has contributed.

Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) are a national network of volunteer community-based committees, act as an important link between the Australian Government and rural and regional communities. The ACCs work in partnership to identify opportunities, priorities and development strategies for their regions. The 56 ACCs have a key role in promoting and assessing applications for the *Regional Partnerships* program but also have responsibilities in the delivery of other government programs.

Before today's changes a *Regional Partnerships* proponent developed an application, sometimes with the help of their local ACC. The application was then assessed by the DOTARS regional office who asked the ACC for advice. At that stage, the ACC assigned a priority to the project. The national office reviewed the application before it came before the Minister for Transport and Regional Services for a decision. The Minister took the ACC's advice into consideration in deciding whether or not to approve the applications.

**ENDS**