

Cross-border Issues

- 11.1 It is unquestionably the case that interstate disputes and perceptions of responsibilities at borders have been a blight on the national transport system, both for the freight and passenger sectors.
- 11.2 There is no clear-cut delineation of financial responsibility. The consequences of this impact on efficiency, productivity and downstream costs and safety.
- 11.3 Without impinging on the constitutional prerogatives of the parties, a way must be found to co-ordinate, facilitate and execute projects of regional and national significance and across borders.
- 11.4 The committee has seen at borders some parlous examples of neglect on the one hand and lack of vision on the other. A typical example is the neglect of cross-border grain lines. A rail map of north-western Victoria and its adjoining regions of NSW and South Australia, paints an unmistakable picture.
- 11.5 Some interesting parallels can be drawn from the situation of the Green Triangle region in South-East South Australia and Western Victoria.
- 11.6 Roads shared by shires and across borders, have had a long history of neglect but when this is translated to the national scene and interstate/Federal-State arrangements it becomes little short of a scandal.
- 11.7 During the inquiry the Committee was made aware of many examples of neglect and painfully slow planning, both in evidence and media articles. Typical of these were the Woodenbong-Legume

section of the Casino-Warwick road, the Tugun Bypass, the Princes Highway from Port Kembla to Bairnsdale, road and rail possibilities in the Mildura region, rail potential in connections between Mt Gambier and Penola with Portland, ownership and antiquated signalling arrangements on the Sydney/Brisbane line between the NSW border and Brisbane, and the neglect of cross-border bridges.

- 11.8 The Committee believes there is a case for a new mechanism perhaps in the form of individual Road and Rail Border Commissions, especially at NSW/QLD, NSW/Victoria, Victoria/South Australian borders. A case could also be made for a tripartite commission around the meeting of the three states near Mildura. Further commissions could be structured to cope with NT/Western Australia, NT/Queensland, WA/SA matters as new roads and rail lines are considered.
- 11.9 These commissions, established under complementary State and Commonwealth legislation, should include Ministerial, departmental and engineering expertise. ARTC and the National Transport Commission should also be members.
- 11.10 The Committee recommends an all out effort over the next ten years with an Australian Government contribution of \$500 million with complementary state contributions on a formula of 50/25/25 (or in the case of Mildura and adjoining regions 40/20/20/20).
- 11.11 The Committee believes this sense of urgency and focus is the only way to resolve a long neglected problem.
- 11.12 The Committee felt there was a compelling case for cross-border rail and road connections (or upgrades) from Mt Gambier and Penola to Portland to facilitate the movement of increasing quantities of woodchips, pulp and mineral sands.

Recommendation 25

11.13 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- **establish Road and Rail Border Commissions, consisting of Australian and State Government representatives (ministerial, departmental and engineering) to advise on, facilitate and execute major border transport projects and cross-border road and rail extensions, in a focused and timely manner.**
- **fund, over a ten year period, the projects and works identified by the Commissions, on the basis of Australian Government 50 per cent, State Governments 25 per cent each. A lack of co-operation on timely action in the establishment of the Commission should exempt the Australian Government from further responsibility.**
- **establish a Commonwealth fund of \$1 billion for this purpose over the first five years, distributed on the basis of bids from the Commissions. The program should be reviewed at the end of that period, and possibly extended to ten years.**

Paul Neville MP

Committee Chair

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