



Coming to Grips with the National Transport Agenda

The Australian Freight Councils Network met on 20 November in Sydney. The key issue bringing the state-based freight councils and the Australian Logistics Council together was how to effectively engage with the diverse groups, structures and processes that make up the work program of the Federal Government in its reform and planning task for transport.

“We find the complex web of groups, reviews and reforms quite daunting to follow. Translating this into some sort of meaningful way for industry to engage is very difficult” stated John Begley, Chair of the AFCN. “There are a number of concurrent processes, reviews, inquiries, working groups and meetings going on across numerous bodies. It is early days, but we need to work out the most efficient way for industry to take part.”

The AFCN aims to chart industry input at useful points in these processes. To date AFCN members have engaged in the NTC-led Supply Chain Capacity Pilots, the NT Government-led Skills and Workforce Working Group, House of Representatives Inquiries and submission to Infrastructure Australia. The AFCN is preparing to submit to the NSW-led Working Group on Efficient Transport Markets and Regulation, in conjunction with the ALC. Paul Sullivan of the National Transport Commission took part in the meeting, outlining the efforts the NTC is making to inform industry on the national agenda.

While national advisory groups are heavily involved, industry in each jurisdiction has a viewpoint tempered by the circumstances in that state and its unique array of infrastructure, state regulation and culture. “This is a viewpoint that freight councils bring to the national agenda which adds value. Of course, all Federal plans, policies and regulations will need industry cooperation to become reality” commented Malcolm Bush, 3PL specialist and Board member of the Freight & Logistics Council NSW (FALCONSW).

The AFCN received updates on progress towards single freight councils in each state and the valuable input that the transport unions are making to the work of the freight councils and ALC.

The AFCN was briefed by Paul Weedon of Sydney Ports Corporation on the Port Botany Landside Efficiency initiatives, considering the implications for other ports. It also received a detailed briefing on the Australian Parliament’s Coastal Shipping Inquiry and subsequent development of new national shipping policy.

John Begley summed up the AFCN focus in the national scene - “At a time of economic constraint, the freight councils will continue to focus on establishing more productive transport systems, efficiency and innovation. The big challenges are getting more out of current infrastructure capacity, tackling urban congestion and getting a consistent approach to regulation across governments.”

For more information, please contact the AFCN Secretariat on 03 8688 1830.