

Submission to: GHD Advisory

Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development
and Cities

Title: Princes Highway Corridor Strategy

Date: April 2019



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1. About the Australian Trucking Association

The ATA is the peak body representing the Australian trucking industry. Its members include state and sector-based trucking associations, some of the nation's largest transport companies, and businesses with leading expertise in truck technology.

2. Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should set a future objective to achieve PBS level 2B as of right access (30 metres) along the entire corridor and an immediate priority to enable B-double (26 metres) access.

Recommendation 2

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should require all upgrades to be built to PBS level 2B standard, to ensure the HPFV access objective is achievable.

Recommendation 3

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should set out a detailed project investment priority list, with projected timeframes, to achieve the HPFV access objective.

Recommendation 4

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should deliver a detailed assessment of heavy vehicle rest areas on the corridor and include an investment plan which delivers the right quality and quantity of rest areas for this significant freight corridor.

Recommendation 5

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should integrate with local government land use strategies, including setting out HPFV town bypasses, to ensure the future operation of this key freight corridor for HPFV access and the protection of the amenity of local communities.

Recommendation 6

The Australian Government should implement a national, strategic planning approach to the selection of corridors for expanding the corridor strategy and investment approach.

Recommendation 7

The Australian Government should commit to developing a corridor strategy for the Hume Highway as an immediate priority.

Recommendation 8

The Australian Government should expand the corridor approach to include freight routes beyond south eastern Australia and include key links to the Princes Highway corridor.

3. Introduction

The Australian Trucking Association welcomes the commitment from the Australian Government to develop the Princes Highway Corridor Strategy (PHCS). The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities (DIRDC) has engaged GHD Advisory to work with the Australian, South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales governments on developing the strategy.

The February 2019 GHD Advisory Issues Paper identifies the Princes Highway as a major tourist, freight and commuter corridor, where connectivity on the corridor plays a critical economic role.

Road freight is an enabler of opportunity, allowing businesses to reach domestic and international markets, consumers to purchase goods, farms to sell their produce, and construction materials to enable new developments. This is particularly critical to supporting jobs and economic growth in rural and regional communities. The Productivity Commission has reported on the importance of access to new domestic and international markets, provision of infrastructure, and removal of barriers to heavy vehicle access to encourage and support regional economic transition and development.¹

Trucking is critical to moving Australia's freight task. The Productivity Commission has found that only 10 to 15 per cent of the freight task is considered to be contestable across both rail and road.² For non-bulk domestic freight, more than 75 per cent is carried on Australian roads.³ The national domestic freight task is forecast to grow 26 per cent by 2026, having already grown 50 per cent in the 10 years to 2016.

Trucking is an Australian success story. Between 1971 and 2007 trucking industry productivity increased six-fold due to the uptake of high productivity vehicles like B-doubles. Without this productivity growth an extra 150,000 articulated trucks would have been required to keep our economy moving.⁴

However, this success has not yet been fully achieved on all sections of the Princes Highway. Limitations still prevent accessibility for B-doubles, let alone newer, more productive combinations. On other corridors, industry and governments are now progressing more productive heavy vehicle combinations which carry a greater payload compared to a B-double, reducing the number of truck trips required for the freight task. **Without a considered and detailed plan to increase the use high productivity freight vehicles (HPFV) on the Princes Highway, the corridor will produce higher numbers of heavy vehicle trips and increased freight costs.**

The PHCS should deliver:

- A vision for improved high productivity freight vehicle access,
- Prioritisation for safety infrastructure upgrades,
- Analysis of current infrastructure constraints preventing HPFV access,
- Analysis of freight movements and future volumes within, along and from the corridor,
- Analysis of heavy vehicle rest areas on the corridor,
- Assessment of bridge strength and accessibility issues, and
- Land use changes and development.

The PHCS should address all of these issues in detail and link to a detailed investment plan.

¹ Productivity Commission, April 2017, [Transitioning Regional Economies Initial Report](#), 121-127

² Productivity Commission, December 2006, [Road and Rail Freight Infrastructure Pricing](#), XXIX.

³ Australian Government, 2014, *Trends: Infrastructure and Transport to 2030*, as quoted by Volvo Group Australia, 2016, *Professional Truck Shortage*

⁴ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport, and Regional Economics, 2011, *Truck productivity*, ix

4. Setting corridor objectives and a HPFV vision

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should define a vision for HPFV accessibility, and detail the steps required to achieve this vision.

Sections of the corridor, in particular on the far south coast in New South Wales, fail to provide accessibility for B-double combinations, which have proven critical to the productivity of Australian road freight.

The HPFV accessibility vision for the future of the Princes Highway should however be to a higher productivity standard than the B-double, otherwise the PHCS will lock the corridor into maximum productivity benefits that are already being eclipsed elsewhere.

The PHCS should define a future objective for PBS 2B (30 metre) combinations to access the Princes Highway, with a more immediate goal to achieve B-double (26 metre) access. Upgrades should be to the standard required to achieve PBS 2B access to ensure this future goal becomes attainable.

Likewise, the strategy should analyse freight movements and identify current and future freight connections. Understanding the major industries, communities and connections with other corridors will be critical to understanding the major freight requirements on the corridor.

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5. Prioritising a long-term investment plan

The ATA welcomes the Australian Government's introduction of the Roads of Strategic Importance (RoSI) program, and in particular the allocation of investment funds for upgrading a road on a corridor basis. Producing the detailed investment plan as part of the PHCS is important to realising the full value of the RoSI program and identifying the level of funding that the corridor will require.

Across the corridor the 2019-20 Federal Budget allocated \$1 billion in Australian Government funding (with \$250 million expected in state jurisdiction funding), with the initial funds allocated to be spent in 2020-21 and the majority of the funds allocated between 2023-24 and 2028-29. For this funding to be effective the PHCS needs to identify and prioritise a detailed investment plan for upgrading the corridor.

This would be consistent with the Infrastructure Victoria recommendation to establish a transparent and evidence based process for prioritising regional highway upgrades.⁵

It is also vital that the PHCS provides a detailed assessment and investment plan for the provision of heavy vehicle rest areas. New heavy vehicle rest area (HVRA) guidelines were released by Austroads in January 2019. The new HVRA guidelines identify that provision of HVRA on the road network supports the safe system objectives and the safe people cornerstone. Additionally, the

⁵ Infrastructure Victoria, December 2016, [Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy](#), 167.

guidelines specify that a detailed HVRA strategy should be developed for major highways and significant freight routes.

Austrroads also report that issues relating to spacing and placement of HVRA are fundamental to their ability to safely and effectively facilitate adequate rest for heavy vehicle drivers. Issues such as fatigue requirements, traffic congestion, heavy vehicle demand and steep grades are all critical in determining the spacing between HVRA, which may require increases in frequency. Austrroads recommend spacing between HVRA to be 70-100km apart for class 1 and class 2 HVRA, 35-50km apart for class 3 and class 4 HVRA, and 15-25km apart for class 5 HVRA.

Noting the Austrroads recommendation, the ATA would recommend that a detailed HVRA strategy for the corridor needs to allow that average heavy vehicle speeds are typically around 80 km/h and are not the same as the top allowable speed. Considering this, the ATA would recommend that class 1 HVRA's should be no greater than 80km apart.

The PHCS needs to deliver this detailed assessment and plan for HVRA on the corridor, or it will breach this new safety standard for major highways and significant freight routes.

Recommendation 4

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should deliver a detailed assessment of heavy vehicle rest areas on the corridor and include an investment plan which delivers the right quality and quantity of rest areas for this significant freight corridor.

6. Integration with land use strategies

Urban development in the corridor is likely to be concentrated in major towns and centres, and lead to increased traffic volumes on the corridor. The PHCS should analysis these impacts.

It is also important to address current and future concerns about the amenity of towns, communities and main streets (such as from the impact of heavy vehicle traffic), accessibility from current and future industrial lands and the possible impacts from current or future town by passes.

As a regional freight corridor, the vision for the Princes Highway corridor needs to be one for HPFV access (B-double access in the short term and PBS 2B access in the longer term), without operating under time curfew or other restrictions. This requires integration with local land use strategies which should identify:

- Corridor protection for the Princes and HPFV access and staged upgrades in urban areas, including HPFV bypasses. Where necessary, this should include HPFV town bypasses to protect the amenity of communities and local main streets and ensure that residential development does not restrict the future ability of the highway to operate without time curfews.
- Accessibility from the corridor to urban industrial estates and logistics zones, including the provision of coupling and uncoupling bays.
- Incorporation of rest areas and service centres in urban regions of the Princes corridor to allow HPFV drivers to take rest breaks adjacent to urban areas.

Recommendation 5

The Princes Highway Corridor Strategy should integrate with local government land use strategies, including setting out HPFV town bypasses, to ensure the future operation of this key freight corridor for HPFV access and the protection of the amenity of local communities.

7. Linkage with a national corridor investment strategy

The ATA welcomes the Australian Government reforms to consider and fund road projects on a planned corridor basis. It is important to consider a corridor in its entirety, as opposed to the need to upgrade a single intersection, blackspot or bridge. This places a higher priority on ensuring that road upgrades deliver an improvement in the corridor, in particular for heavy vehicle access and use of modern, safer and more productive vehicles.

Initiatives including the development of corridor strategies for the Newell and Princes highways, and allocation of funding across the Australian Government's 10-year infrastructure pipeline to upgrade these corridors, represent important reforms to the delivery of infrastructure funding.

It is of vital importance that the corridor strategies deliver detailed, prioritised investment plans in order to realise the benefits from this reform. Government may also need to reconsider the infrastructure pipeline commitments to these corridors once the full scale of what is actually required is known.

Additionally, as the development of corridor strategies and infrastructure pipeline commitments on a corridor basis have the ability to improve the delivery of infrastructure upgrades, the Australian Government should ensure that there is a considered, national and strategically planned approach to the selection and delivery of corridor strategies and commitments.

The NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework (September 2018) seeks to provide a strategic planning approach to heavy vehicle access.⁶ It identifies that the freight routes with the highest freight flows in NSW are the Newell, Hume, Sydney-Newcastle, Pacific, New England, Golden and Great Western corridors.⁷ In particular, the Hume Highway from Melbourne to Sydney is the nation's busiest interstate freight route which carries 40 per cent of the total national road freight task.⁸

This NSW strategic planning approach identifies the Hume, Pacific and Golden highways as priorities for enabling access for 30 metre PBS 2B vehicles. It also identifies that whilst the Hume Highway is suitable for these vehicles operating at 68 tonnes (due to bridge constraints), that existing rest areas were designed for 26 metre B-doubles and could not adequately accommodate 30 metre vehicles. There is also a lack of decoupling sites at the Sydney end.⁹ This demonstrates:

- The need to identify, via a strategic approach, corridors which need to be planned and invested in on a corridor basis,
- Pressing need to include the Hume Highway in the corridor approach, and
- The limitations that result from infrastructure upgrades which do not enable future productivity (in this case, rest areas which are not long enough).

Additionally, a national strategic planning approach to the selection of corridors should consider the need to link corridors (such as links from the Princes to the Hume in NSW) and the need to also include corridors outside of south east Australia. There are a number of key corridors that could benefit from this approach in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Linkage from the Princes corridor will need to be considered with:

- Hume Highway corridor (including from the NSW south coast to Canberra, Goulburn and Yass),
- Port Botany, Port Kembla and Port of Melbourne,
- Wollongong to Picton, and the
- Victorian HPFV network.

⁶ NSW Government, September 2018, NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework, 5.

⁷ Ibid, 26.

⁸ Ibid, 33.

⁹ Ibid, 33.

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