

## Level Crossing Closures Policy

### Purpose

To provide guidance and direction to transport planners and infrastructure managers in the ongoing development and management of the NSW rail network.

### Background

Level crossings are the points at which roads and rail meet at substantially the same grade; they can represent significant collision potential for pedestrians, road and rail users.

Although the number of collisions appear to have stabilised in recent years and is at a historically low level, crashes at level crossings have the potential for high consequences.

In addition, there is concern about the number and significance of level crossing safety incidents involving heavy vehicles. Findings from a 2011 national research project show heavy freight vehicles are over represented in collisions at level crossings and the likelihood of fatalities is greater in crashes involving heavy freight vehicles compared to other types of road vehicles. This is also of concern given the projected growth in Australian freight over the next few decades; between 2010 and 2030 truck traffic is predicted to increase by 50% and rail freight is expected to jump by 90%.<sup>1</sup>

While engineering improvements (such as boom gates and flashing lights) can reduce the potential for accidents between road vehicles and trains, closure is ultimately the best method of completely eliminating risk at a level crossing.

There are two categories of level crossings in New South Wales. The first is an accommodation level crossing. Rail infrastructure owners are required under the *Public Works Act 1912* to provide a level crossing where the construction of a railway line cuts access to a road or a property. These accommodation crossings can be either private or public.

Private accommodation level crossings allow access to private properties, or between parts of private properties and are for the exclusive use of the property holder and their nominees and are not open to public access. Public accommodation crossings are located on main or local roads where the Roads and Maritime Services or local government is the road owner.

The second type of level crossing is a licensed crossing. These crossings were constructed after the railway line and require a licence agreement between the track owner and the entity requesting usage.

Due to the safety risk associated with level crossings, it is Government policy that where alternative access exists and following consultation with affected parties, level crossings be closed whenever possible.

Formal closure of any level crossing requires Ministerial approval under the *Transport Administration Act 1988*.

### TfNSW Position

To manage the risks to safety associated with road and rail interfaces, the closure of public and

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: ITSR, *NSW Level Crossing Strategy Council Six-monthly report covering occurrences to 31 March 2012*, April 2012 and Source: [Infrastructure Australia](#)

private level crossings in NSW is to be pursued, where it is practical and cost effective to do so. Access may be managed by a grade separation or by redirecting traffic via an alternate approved access route.

### **The Process for Closing a Level Crossing and Issues to be Considered**

While the closure of level crossings is strongly supported, it is recognised that the closure of a level crossing may have adverse impacts on the adjacent landowners, emergency services, the community, road authorities, and other road and rail users. Proposals to close level crossings should, therefore, be based on a comprehensive analysis of road and rail operational risks, impacts, costs and benefits, and, if necessary, provision of safe and convenient alternative access. The approval process must also incorporate effective consultation which includes seeking local community support to close the level crossing and addresses the concerns of the local community.

Under s99B of *Transport Administration Act 1988*, a rail infrastructure owner may close any level crossing provided that prior to closing the crossing, it notifies Roads and Maritime Services and local council and receives Ministerial approval.

TfNSW reviews all applications for level crossing closures before they are submitted to the Minister to ensure that the relevant issues have been considered and adequate consultation has been undertaken with the land owner, the local council, emergency services, Roads and Maritime Services (if they are the road authority), and any other relevant parties.

Funding under the Level Crossing Improvement Program (LCIP) is supplementary to the existing capital and maintenance programs of rail infrastructure agencies to improve and maintain safety at the level crossings on their networks. Funding for level crossing closures is outside the scope of the LCIP.

The Level Crossing Strategy Council (LCSC) can be asked to provide advice on level crossing closures.