

Rodd Staples
Secretary, Transport for NSW
PO Box K659
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Dear Mr Staples,

Re: Submission: The Draft NSW Freight and Ports Plan.

I write to provide feedback regarding the Draft NSW Freight & Ports Plan which is currently on exhibition.

Port Stephens Council is responsible for the delivery of high quality services in the most efficient, cost effective and transparent way. These are identified through ongoing and robust consultation with the community and its leaders. Our Economy is a key focus area for Council, including *"facilitate initiatives to support business growth and development and investment and job creation in Port Stephens."*

Freight infrastructure is a key consideration for industry in Port Stephens, with manufacturing in the Tomago/Heatherbrae area a key driver of the region's economy contributing 43.4% of total output and 19% of total employment (4,322 jobs). Manufacturing exports are currently valued at \$4.94B (particularly metal and metal products and technical equipment and appliance manufacturing); plus \$2.9B in imports (particularly in basis non-ferrous metal manufacturing). This sector is reliant on quality transport connections to create and sustain competitive advantage, particularly an efficient and cost-effective container freight supply chain.

While it is noted that the Draft NSW Freight & Ports Plan does not include mention of a container terminal at Port of Newcastle, Council strongly supports this concept and recommends its inclusion as a complementary option to Port Botany which would improve NSW competitiveness compared with other Eastern Australian states.

A container terminal at the Port of Newcastle would be a key enabler for the broader region, and offer the Port Stephens economy, particularly its manufacturing and defence sectors, significant benefits:

- The opportunity to remain sustainable and grow in an environment when much Australian manufacturing is relocating offshore to reduce costs. Without a container terminal choice, many of the region's exporters are paying more to send their freight further afield to Port Botany. In many cases, the freight is railed or driven right past the Port of Newcastle.
- Environmental and safety benefits achieved through directing containers from northern NSW through Port of Newcastle rather than Port Botany, reducing the number of trucks on the region's motorways and Sydney's roads.

- Port Stephens has available and appropriately zoned land which would be suitable for development of intermodal facilities in connection with a container terminal.

The draft NSW Future Transport 2056 Strategy and the Draft NSW Freight & Ports Plan identify significant congestion issues surrounding Port Botany, contemplated as the sole container port until after 2040. Substantial government infrastructure projects are proposed to alleviate this congestion. However, both documents appear to overlook the underutilised freight capacity that exists at the Port of Newcastle.

The Port of Newcastle already has direct rail access to the national Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) network. This includes the North South Rail Corridor connecting Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. The Port is also part of the Hunter Valley Rail Network, connecting the Hunter Valley and Western NSW. Importantly, the Port will also have a direct link via the existing ARTC track to the Inland Rail at Parkes, helping prevent the loss of NSW trade to Brisbane and Melbourne. Port Botany and Port Kembla do not have a direct rail link to the Inland Rail.

Port Stephens Council strongly supports the inclusion of a Port of Newcastle Container Terminal in the NSW Freight & Ports Plan.

Council also notes that the draft Plan identifies the need to expand the existing road and rail network, in support of freight. We propose that:

- This be expanded to specifically include rail access to Newcastle Airport, for both freight and passenger services.
- The Plan clearly articulate the need to identify and protect future road and freight corridors.
- Prioritise funding for upgrade of regional freight routes, including the Pacific Highway extension to Raymond Terrace.

Thank you for considering Port Stephens Council's submission.

Wayne Wallis
General Manager

22 March 2018