

The NSW Freight Transport Advisory Council (FTAC) provides strategic advice to the NSW Government on freight transport strategies, policies, and projects in NSW. The Council also provides a link between the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and the freight transport sector.

FTAC Meeting 13 February 2023

The first meeting of 2023 of the NSW Freight Transport Advisory Council (FTAC) was held on Monday 13 February, chaired by independent council member Hon Duncan Gay. Members were engaged in an in-depth presentation on the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program - Blackheath to Little Hartley Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Network improvements and resilience

Minister Farraway, in his address to members, re-stated the NSW Government's continuing commitment to supporting the freight task and improving the road and rail networks. A notable recent achievement was the establishment of the \$500 million Regional and Local Roads Repair Program, providing funding for councils in NSW to undertake urgent road repairs, priority corrective maintenance and to repair potholes on council roads particularly affected by the extreme weather.

The State infrastructure pipeline will continue to deliver improvements for freight, including the Muswellbrook and Singleton bypass projects, M1 to Raymond Terrace extension, Hexham widening and the Great Western Highway upgrade.

New projects to improve rail include the recently announced Gilgandra and Coonamble project as part of the NSW Government's Fixing Country Rail Program. This project will improve the capacity and reliability of freight in Orana, a vital grain-producing region. The upgrade will allow access for heavier trains and increase the total produce that can be transported through the region and provide the same axle load capability of the Inland Rail alignment that will connect at Curban in the future.

Regional Freight Forums

The Minister reinforced the need to maintain a sustained focus on the insights from the seven Regional Freight Forums held across NSW in October and November 2022. Investment prioritisation in road and rail, and timeliness of maintenance, were consistent themes that emerged from engaging with the freight industry and local government. Heavy vehicle driver recruitment, especially targeted recruitment of the younger generation, continues to be a key theme, as well as the need for more and improved heavy vehicle rest stops.

Another theme identified at the regional forums was customer information about network impacts and the OneRoad project to integrate council managed roads onto Live Traffic. The project aims to have all 128 councils participating by 2024.

In closing, the Minister remarked that natural disaster funding and betterment projects remain critical to rebuilding resilience into the infrastructure, and re-stated his commitment to promoting holistic road and rail freight strategies that support interconnectivity and integration across the freight transport network.

Great Western Highway Upgrade - Blackheath to Little Hartley Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Great Western Highway is the key east-west road freight and transport route between Sydney and Central West NSW. A presentation was given on the upgrade program which is jointly funded by the Australian and NSW governments and is upgrading the network to two lanes in each direction between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The program will deliver social, economic and customer outcomes, including separation of large trucks from village main streets and two new rest areas in Hartley Valley. The proposed tunnel would remove a major constraint and reduce the vertical alignment to around 1.7 per cent which will accommodate higher productivity vehicles. Future proofing in key areas will directly support increased freight efficiency and productivity, network performance and safety and amenity improvements.

The project creates significant beneficial outcomes for the freight industry and the community including up to four hours less travel time due to higher productivity vehicles having access to the corridor; 33 per cent less freight operating costs, and an increase in regional jobs resulting from accessibility improvements. Additionally, there will be a 200 per cent increase in capacity with 265,000 more vehicle trips and 1,400 fewer vehicles queuing from improved reliability, reduced travel times and less congestion.

Transport for NSW encourages freight stakeholders to submit a response to the Blackheath to Little Hartley Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is a key consultation process during the project's development. Submissions must be made to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment by **Midnight, Wednesday 1 March 2023** via:

Online: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects>

Post: Director of Transport Assessments, Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022 PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Ministerial attendance

- Hon. Sam Faraway – Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Member attendance

- Hon. Duncan Gay, Chair of Freight Transport Advisory Council
- Austin Vella, Chair Road Freight NSW
- Hermione Parsons, CEO Australian Logistics Council
- Marika Calfas, CEO NSW Ports
- Neil Johns, Executive General Manager Namoi Cotton
- Wade Lewis, President Livestock Bulk and Rural Carriers Association
- Scott Walker, National Transport Manager Mondiale VGL
- Ben Pratt, Director Corporate Affairs (for Paul Digney, Managing Director Qube)
- Caroline Wilkie, CEO Australasian Railway Association (Apology)
- Rick Dani, Head of Store Delivery Woolworths Group (Apology)
- Craig Carmody, CEO Port of Newcastle (Apology)
- Geoff Crouch, Executive Director Ron Crouch Transport (Apology)
- Les Logue, Head of Retail Transport & Linehaul Toll Group (Apology)
- Warren Clark, CEO NatRoad (Apology)
- Andrew Harding, Chair Freight on Rail Group (Apology)
- Michael Gallacher, CEO Ports Australia (Apology)

TfNSW representatives

- Matt Fuller, Deputy Secretary Regional & Outer Metropolitan
- Scott Greenow, A/Executive Director, Freight Branch
- Jen Travis, Director, Customer Engagement and Delivery, Freight Branch

Presenters: Great Western Highway Upgrade

- John Dinan, Director, Great Western Highway, TfNSW
- Peter Wheen, Technical Director, Great Western Highway, TfNSW
- Jessica Prochazkova, Snr Community & Customer Engagement Officer ROM, TfNSW

FTAC Secretariat

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