

## Gilgandra Shire Council – Freight Policy Reform Submission

### Question One

#### Response

*Is there a significant change needed in the freight industry or in the way the NSW Government and the Australian Government support this task and if so, in which particular area(s)?*

Yes, there is a significant need for change in the freight industry and the way both the NSW Government and the Australian Government support it. The current policy that restricts the Port of Newcastle from being considered a container terminal until NSW Ports reach capacity creates significant operational challenges for regions like Gilgandra. It restricts the broader economic and logistical benefits that could be realised by utilising Newcastle as a container port, which would help alleviate congestion in Sydney and Port Botany. For Gilgandra, this change would mean reduced freight costs, improved efficiency, and enhanced competitiveness for our agricultural and broader industries.

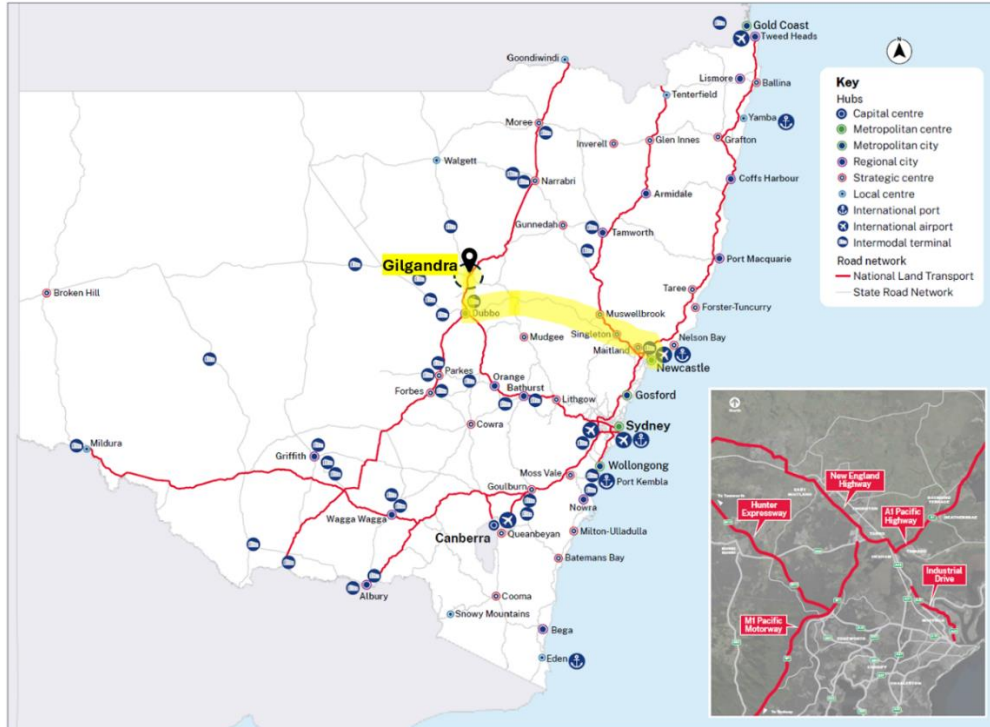
*What actions would have the greatest impact in achieving a productive, sustainable and resilient freight system?*

Gilgandra produces approximately 20,000 t per annum of agricultural commodities, including grains and pulses, with a modal share of 50/50 between road and rail. This production is expected to increase to 102,500 t per annum over the next 10 years. Road freight travels south on the Newell Highway and then moves onto the Golden Highway at Dubbo, heading to the port of Newcastle. Rail freight travels from Gilgandra to Dubbo and then to Newcastle.

Importantly, the completion of the section of Inland Rail from Narromine to Narrabri and from Moree north to the Queensland Border is important for NSW.

Investing in rail and road infrastructure, as well as developing the Curban Intermodal, will have the greatest impact on the freight system. Upgrading the Golden Highway to Newcastle to reduce road traffic accidents and improve overall safety. Construction of the Maryvale – Gulgong line and the upgrade of the Gulgong – Ulan line to avoid the need to shunt at Merrygoen. Overcoming challenges associated with the modal shift from road to rail to improve connectivity to the Port of Newcastle.

## Current Road Freight Corridor



Source: Transport for NSW

## Current Rail Freight Corridor



Source: Transport for NSW

What role do you see for regulations at ports that govern truck, rail and stevedore movements?

Regulations should support the use of high-productivity vehicles and technologies. Overcoming limitations that currently favour Sydney's ports and allowing Newcastle to fully develop as a container terminal will alleviate congestion and reduce costs.

Working together, are there particular principles or approaches that the NSW and Australian Governments should apply in relation to the road and rail networks?

The NSW and Australian Governments should align Local Government priorities. For our region, focusing on freight routes like the Newell and Golden Highways will improve connectivity and efficiency to the Port of Newcastle. Instead of local governments having to apply for grants to support these routes, there should be a strategic framework in place that automatically includes funding to ensure freight corridors receive the necessary support without unnecessary bureaucratic delays. There should be a balanced approach to funding freight corridors to avoid funnelling all infrastructure spending to a single port. This balance will increase competitiveness, provide producers with more options, and ultimately benefit regional economies.

What would improve interoperability across the freight system and what are the priorities?

Upgrading connections between different transport modes, standardising vehicle and infrastructure standards, and investing in technologies that facilitate better mode transfers. Prioritise the development of the Curban intermodal hub, work with ARTC and Transport for NSW to remove the PBS2B restrictions between Mendooran and Dunedoo. Improving freight corridors and container hubs to the Port of Newcastle. Construction of the Maryvale – Gulgong line and the upgrade of the Gulgong – Ulan line. Upgrading the Golden Highway to Newcastle

What role do IMTs play in the freight network and do you have suggestions for how this could be improved?

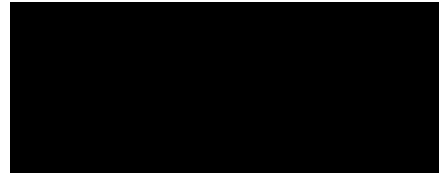
Improvements should focus on strategic location planning, increasing capacity, and better operations for efficiency. Developing the Curban intermodal hub and upgrading the road network surrounding Curban to improve the freight network for Gilgandra and the surrounding region.

When working effectively, what role would each level of government play in the freight system? Consider the development of intermodals, distribution centres and depots, refuelling sites, empty container parks, truck delivery schedules and connecting freight corridors?

Federal government: National transport policies and funding major infrastructure projects.  
State governments: Manage regional planning, infrastructure maintenance, and regulatory frameworks.  
Local governments: local logistics and land use planning

What technology or innovations are currently underutilised or would have the greatest benefit to the NSW freight system?

Fuel efficiency, automation in container handling, and advanced logistics management systems



Is urban encroachment and the rezoning of industrial land for other purposes impacting the freight task - how? What are the long term implications? How could various levels of government assist with better land use planning?

The long-term implications include reduced efficiency and capacity of freight systems, higher transportation costs, and potential economic downturns for regions dependent on freight operations.

What role do you see for land use planning for port activity and managing the rapidly growing and changing freight task?

Pre-planning and land use approvals be included ahead of actual infrastructure development along lines of SAPs.

What role do you see for both the NSW and Australian Governments in transport planning and investment? What principles should apply to the planning process and in prioritising investments?

Both levels of government should work together on transport planning, with clear guidelines such as cost-benefit analysis, sustainability, and alignment with national strategies guiding informed investment decisions. It impact regions like Gilgandra in ensuring that investments in projects deliver maximum benefits.

The NSW and Australian Governments should work together to plan and prioritise the national port and freight strategy (including prioritising the completion of Inland Rail) and better coordinate the interface improvements at the intersections of Inland Rail and the Country Regional Network (CRN) and ARTC lines, as well as IMTs at intersections.

How well are workforce issues being managed and what is the role of government in this?

What are the main workforce risks facing the industry?

Key risks in the region include labour shortages and the need for ongoing skills development in new technologies and logistics management.

## Question Two

### Response

*Do you find the current rail freight policy is fit for purpose? Does it deliver an effective network for your freight delivery?*

For the current freight policy to be fit for purpose it will need to be reevaluated to align with future demands and contribute effectively to the state's economic competitiveness.

*What changes would you suggest for the future?*

The completion of Inland Rail from Narromine to Narrabri, and Moree to the Border is important for the movement of NSW freight.

Improve connections from Inland Rail to ARTC/CRN at Curban to ensure capability for trains to turn both ways

Standardise a minimum of 25 Tonne Axle Load across the network to support heavier loads, increase efficiency, and reduce the number of trips needed for transporting the same amount of freight.

Upgrade signal technology to improve safety and speed of rail operations, allowing for more reliable and frequent services.

Implement strategies for longer trains to carry more freight per journey, improving capacity and reducing transportation costs. Improved train refuelling regimen to minimise downtime.

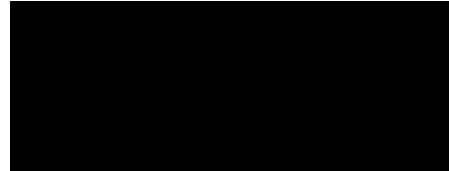
Use RORO wagons, return fuel wagons instead of ISO containers, and include return animal wagons to better cater to specific freight needs.

*To what extent do different rail tasks (such as the movement of bulk goods or containers) support a modal shift to rail?*

The movement of bulk goods, such as grain, supports a shift to rail due to the high volume and weight of these commodities. Rail is typically more cost-effective and efficient for transporting bulk goods over long distances compared to road transport. The movement of containerised goods also supports a modal shift to rail by offering flexibility, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, especially for long-distance transport. Containers can be easily transferred between different transport modes, making intermodal transport a viable option.

*How do you see Inland Rail impacting or changing your operations? What should the NSW Government do to harness the benefits Inland Rail will deliver?*

Inland Rail will impact operations by improving connectivity for the region. The NSW Government should improve connections from Inland Rail to junctions such as Curban, invest in and promote the development of intermodal facilities and simplify regulatory processes to facilitate quicker project approvals and freight movements. Construction of the Maryvale – Gulgong line and the upgrade of the Gulgong – Ulan line. Encouraging the development of regional container hubs that can act as aggregators of freight and ensuring that planning and investment in rail infrastructure are well-integrated with overall state and national transport and economic development strategies. This includes aligning the freight network development with future growth areas and major industrial and agricultural centres.



Have you considered costs and benefits (including public costs and benefits)?

Yes, the costs and benefits associated with the construction of the Maryvale – Gulgong line and the upgrade of the Gulgong – Ulan line have been considered. The total project costs are estimated at \$1.126 billion, including capital, operating, and maintenance costs over 50 years. The benefits include \$266 million in safety benefits, \$1.748 billion in vehicle operating cost savings, \$249 million in road maintenance cost savings, \$337 million in environmental benefits, \$998 million in freight travel time savings, and \$140 million in producer margins, totalling \$3.738 billion in project benefits.

**Question Three:**

**Response**

Gilgandra Shire Council anticipates several changes in port operations due to increases in container trade and the decline of coal exports. Economic benefits for our region can be improved by promoting competitiveness between ports and taking a balanced approach towards infrastructure funding. We recommend allowing PBS 2B vehicles on roads from the Central West to Newcastle to enhance road freight efficiency. Upgrading the Maryvale to Gulgong rail line to accommodate double-stacked trains will significantly improve rail freight capacity. Also, developing a logistics distribution facility at Beresfield and an empty container park in Newcastle for container supply, de-hire, repair, cleaning, and inspection. Improving connections from Inland Rail to ARTC/CRN at Curban and ensuring capability for trains to turn both ways. Anticipating a modal shift from road to rail for containerised agricultural exports will reduce road congestion and lower emissions. Upgrading rail and road infrastructure to accommodate higher productivity vehicles and double-stacked trains is necessary.

For the best transport outcomes, improving rail connectivity and developing intermodal facilities and investing in rail infrastructure to improve connectivity and capacity, particularly for key freight corridors, and establishing intermodal terminals and distribution hubs to streamline goods transfer between transport modes and reduce logistics costs. Implementing PBS for vehicles on major freight routes will improve road freight efficiency. Encouraging a modal shift to rail will reduce road congestion and lower environmental impacts, supporting policies favouring rail transport.



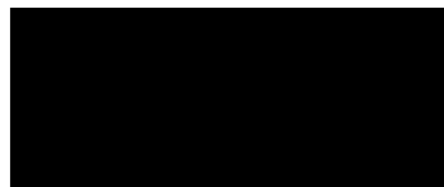
**Question Four:**

**Response**

*What are the most important safety, sustainability and productivity considerations for road corridors?*

The table below summarises the infrastructure constraints along the Golden Highway Road Corridor, which serve as a critical freight corridors to the Port of Newcastle.

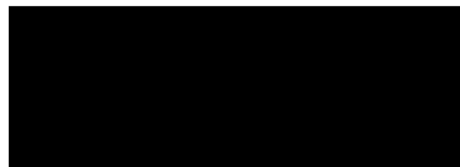
Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
<b>Merriwa to Dunedoo Overtaking Lanes</b>	Increase the number of passing lanes between Merriwa and Dunedoo to reduce congestion and enhance overtaking safety.	Improved road safety with safer overtaking opportunities; addresses the high risk of head-on and run-off road crashes.	Reduces the number of trips needed by improving travel efficiency, indirectly lowering carbon emissions.	Enhances freight efficiency by decreasing travel times, supports economic activities in agriculture and mining.
<b>Dubbo to Dunedoo Overtaking Lanes (West to East)</b>	Increase the number of passing lanes between Dubbo and Dunedoo, heading west to east, to improve the safety and efficiency of the route.	Addresses the lack of overtaking opportunities, which is a major safety risk.	Lower carbon emissions by improving road efficiency.	Increases economic benefits by improving the movement of goods, especially minerals and wind farm components.
<b>Dunedoo to Dubbo Overtaking Lanes (East to West)</b>	Increase the number of passing lanes from Dunedoo to Dubbo, enhancing eastbound traffic flow and safety.	Focuses on reducing crash rates by improving overtaking opportunities.	Promotes a smoother flow of traffic which can help in reducing vehicle emissions.	Improves productivity by facilitating faster movement of freight to economic centers and the port.
<b>Collaroy Bridge over Krui River</b>	Funding is sought for the investigation and construction of improvements to the narrow Collaroy Bridge to	Currently a high-risk area for crashes due to its inadequate width and tight curves.	Improvement could lead to more efficient traffic management and lower emissions from idling vehicles.	Enhances the transportation of large-scale agricultural and mining equipment, facilitating regional growth.



Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
	better accommodate traffic, including OSOM vehicles.			
<b>Cockfighter Bridge over Wollombi Brook</b>	Investigate and potentially widen the Cockfighter Bridge to accommodate increased traffic and OSOM vehicles, addressing its current poor health index rating.	High safety risk due to narrow width and inadequate surface drainage, increasing accident risk.	An upgrade could potentially improve the local environmental management during construction.	Critical for the efficient movement of heavy vehicles and large equipment, essential for local industries.
<b>Golden Highway BAL Treatment at Cassilis Road</b>	Upgrade at the intersection with Cassilis Road to include a dedicated left turning lane, improving safety and traffic flow.	Reduces the risk of rear-end crashes by allowing vehicles to slow down for turns without obstructing through traffic.	Improves traffic flow efficiency, potentially reducing emissions from idling vehicles.	Enhances road capacity and efficiency, particularly beneficial during peak agricultural seasons.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL Treatment at Bylong Valley Way</b>	Intersection upgrade to include left and right turn bays, enhancing road safety and managing increased traffic volumes.	Aims to reduce the frequency and severity of crashes at a high-risk intersection.	Infrastructure improvements will support sustainable land management in high conservation areas.	Critical for managing increased traffic from mining and energy sectors, boosting local economic activities.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL Treatment at Idaville Road</b>	Upgrading intersection to include turn bays, which is expected to ease traffic congestion and enhance road safety.	Enhances safety by reducing potential conflict points and accommodating turning movements more safely.	Efficient vehicle movement reduces overall travel times and vehicle emissions.	Improves the operational efficiency of the road, supporting regional economic growth.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL</b>	Addition of turn bays at Pembroke Road	Improves intersection safety, reducing	Enhanced traffic flow can lead to reduced	Facilitates smoother transport of goods

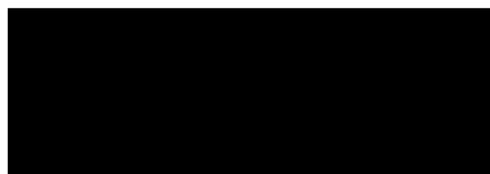


Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
<b>Treatment at Pembroke Road</b>	to handle increased traffic flow and improve intersection safety.	the likelihood of crashes during turning maneuvers.	environmental impact from idling vehicles.	and services, improving regional connectivity.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL Treatment at Reedy Creek Road</b>	Introduction of turn bays to improve safety and manage increased traffic from local developments, including conservation-sensitive areas.	Targeted improvements to reduce crash risks at a known problematic intersection.	Planning includes considerations for the conservation-sensitive surrounding areas.	Improves the reliability and efficiency of freight transport to and from mining areas.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL Treatment at Vinegaroy Road</b>	Adding turn bays to an intersection that sees frequent heavy vehicle traffic, enhancing both safety and traffic flow.	Directly addresses safety by reducing the risk of collisions in an area with heavy vehicle traffic.	Efficient traffic management helps minimise environmental impacts, particularly in conservation areas.	Key to supporting the agricultural sector's peak times by improving route reliability.
<b>Golden Highway BAR/BAL Treatment at Westwood Road</b>	Upgrade to include turn bays, addressing safety concerns at an intersection near conservation areas.	Enhances driver safety by improving intersection layout and reducing conflict points.	Considerate of environmental sensitivities during construction and operation.	Vital for the safe and efficient movement of agricultural produce and mining outputs.
<b>Golden Highway BAR Treatment at Castlereagh Highway</b>	Addition of a right turn bay at a busy intersection to facilitate safer turns and manage increased traffic from industrial activities.	Focuses on reducing traffic congestion-related crashes by providing dedicated turning lanes.	Improvements aim to optimise traffic flow and reduce carbon emissions.	Crucial for supporting significant industrial and agricultural traffic, improving supply chain efficiency.
<b>Golden Highway BAR Treatment at Ringwood Road</b>	Implementing a right turn bay to manage increasing traffic demands and enhance road	Decreases the risk of side-swipe and rear-end collisions by segregating	Enhances overall traffic efficiency, potentially lowering emissions from	Supports regional development by improving access to local



Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
	safety at the intersection.	turning traffic from through lanes.	decreased idling times.	businesses and communities.
<b>Golden Highway BAR Treatment at Ulan Road</b>	Installation of a right turn bay to facilitate heavy vehicle movements, particularly for the mining sector, improving intersection safety and efficiency.	Aims to accommodate heavy mining equipment safely, reducing crash risks.	Project planning includes considerations for heavy vehicle emissions and their impact.	Essential for the mining sector, enhancing the logistical efficiency of coal transport.
<b>Ballimore Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Upgrade rail crossing to allow PBS 2B vehicles, improving freight capacity and safety at the crossing.	Enhances safety by updating crossing to handle larger vehicles, reducing risk of accidents.	Facilitates more efficient freight movement, reducing the number of trips needed for large loads.	Directly boosts productivity by allowing heavier and larger freight loads, crucial for mining and agriculture.
<b>Beni Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Upgrade to increase warning times at the crossing, allowing for the safe passage of larger freight vehicles.	Improves safety by giving drivers more time to react at crossings, reducing potential collisions.	Efficient movement of large vehicles can lead to decreased overall traffic and emissions.	Increases the transport capacity, significantly boosting the efficiency of freight operations.
<b>East Dunedoo Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Enabling PBS 2B vehicle access by improving warning systems and traffic conditions at the crossing.	Increases safety with better warning systems, addressing high-risk assessment findings.	Supports a reduction in congestion and associated emissions with improved traffic management.	Enhances connectivity and capacity, supporting the economic development of the Orana region.
<b>Liamena Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Approval for PBS 2B vehicles at the Liamena crossing to improve freight movement across regional borders.	Safety upgrades to accommodate larger vehicles and reduce the risk of rail-crossing accidents.	Helps in managing the increased traffic efficiently, with potential environmental benefits.	Key upgrade to support the agricultural and mining sectors by improving freight logistics.

Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
<b>Mendooran Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Facilitates PBS 2B access, improving the logistical chain across the region by allowing larger vehicle crossings.	Upgrades will reduce the risk of collisions by improving crossing safety features.	Efficient freight movement reduces the number of trips and potential environmental impact.	Improves regional economic connectivity by facilitating larger freight movements efficiently.
<b>West Dunedoo Rail Crossing Upgrade to PBS 2B Standard</b>	Enhances crossing capabilities for PBS 2B vehicles, increasing the freight capacity and safety of the crossing.	Safety improvements to handle increased freight traffic and larger vehicles.	Reducing congestion and optimizing traffic flow can contribute to environmental sustainability.	Essential for supporting the region's economic growth by improving freight efficiency to and from the port.
<b>Curban Additional Rail Turnouts</b>	Improve operability with Inland Rail, including 4-way connectivity from either Gilgandra or Coonamble, enhance connection with Curban and improve future rail freight movements.	Enhances safety by providing more operational options, reducing potential congestion and accidents.	Improved connectivity supports sustainable freight movements, reducing road freight emissions.	Boosts productivity by providing more efficient routing options and improving overall network operability.
<b>Coonamble Gilgandra Rail Upgrade</b>	Require 'Fit for Purpose' upgrade CRN Gilgandra to Coonamble line with connectivity with Inland Rail at Curban - identified problems include Axle Load constraints (variations currently 19 - 21.75 TAL), train length and train speed restrictions (50km) on the CRN line. Plus, re-railing,	Enhances safety by addressing load constraints and improving infrastructure to reduce the risk of accidents.	Upgrading the rail line reduces the need for road freight, lowering emissions and promoting more sustainable transport.	Improves reliability and capacity of the rail network, supporting regional economic growth and efficient freight transport.



Name	Description	Safety Considerations	Sustainability Considerations	Productivity Considerations
	resurfacing and culvert replacements to improve peak capacity & reliability			
<b>Gilgandra Local/Regional Road Widening</b>	12km of local unsealed road (48181) identified by CSIRO as carrying grain freight greater than 700 trailers annually without being identified in the road network as Rank 1 roads and being classified as narrow.	Improves safety by reducing the risk of accidents on narrow roads and enhancing road conditions for heavy vehicles.	Road widening projects reduce congestion and wear on vehicles, promoting sustainability through less frequent repairs.	Supports agricultural and regional development by improving the efficiency and capacity of critical freight routes.

#### *How can road funding be made more sustainable?*

The process of applying for grants has added a heavy workload for individual staff members at Gilgandra Shire Council, especially for the Director of Infrastructure, who is often responsible for identifying and applying for funding opportunities. This can result in missed opportunities for grants that could benefit the council and the community. The current grant cycle does not allow for coordinating with major acute infrastructure projects, resulting in councils competing with major projects for materials and resources. To make road funding more sustainable, Gilgandra Shire Council recommends Implement a funding model that emphasises long-term outcomes over short-term goals and to transition from competitive, project-specific grants to more predictable, formula-based funding that allows councils to plan with certainty to reduce the administrative burden of grant applications. Streamline the funding application and reporting processes to make it easier for councils to access funds and report on their use. Also, leverage local knowledge by involving councils in the decision-making process for road maintenance and upgrades on freight corridors. This includes considering the specific needs and challenges of local areas in funding decisions.

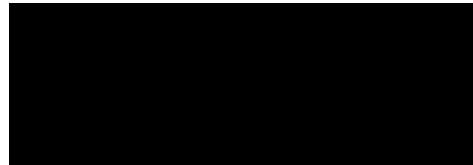
#### **Question Five:**

##### **Response**

#### *How can freight networks be improved to handle the growing freight task while utilising changing technology and lowering emissions?*

Encouraging a shift from road to rail and supporting the use of low-emission vehicles will lower emissions and improve efficiency.





## Question Six

### Response

*How can strategic land use planning better accommodate and plan for urban freight?*

Urban freight requirements need to be formally incorporated into future town and corridor plans. Coordination across all levels of government in order to prevent freight bottlenecks and residential encroachment on port operations, as seen in other East Coast ports. Pre-planning and land use approvals should precede infrastructure development, similar to the SAPs. Formal publication and review of land use plans, coupled with performance measures, can ensure efficient development and rapid conflict resolution. Additionally, encouraging private investment in port and corridor development is crucial. State planning processes need significant overhaul to enhance efficiency, attract investment, and prevent capital flight to other states and countries.

*Is the value of freight logistics and transport adequately recognised in building supply chain resilience?*

While the principles are understood, they are not effectively executed in current strategies. Existing corridor strategies often have single points of failure, missing links, and freight destination limitations, which restrict supply chain efficiency, resilience, and investment. There is an imbalance in supply chain investment, focusing more on urban areas at the expense of long-haul, non-urban supply chains. The clash between passenger and freight priorities, particularly in Sydney and Wollongong, needs addressing to avoid similar issues in Newcastle. A balanced, two-way supply chain flow can enhance resilience and efficiency.

*Do you have any relevant suggestions about improving and implementing strategic land use plans?*

- Treat corridors as SAPs and initiate proactive planning.
- Integrate regional urbanisation into supply chain strategies to attract people to regional centres.
- Address Crown Lands reuse limitations for efficient resolution of ownership and use.
- Aggressively review the state's planning regime to eliminate inefficiencies and ensure accountability.
- Encourage private capital investment in supply chain development, moving away from government-only funding strategies.
- Simplify the planning process to reduce timeframes and make it more responsive to private investment, aiming for approvals within 12 months to meet current demands and expectations.

## Question Seven

### Response

Our experience suggests that government policies often rely on traditional approaches that don't fully capture the dynamic nature of the freight industry. Stakeholder feedback seems to have limited influence. To address this, we invite you to a roundtable discussion in our region to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities we face and incorporate our regional insights into policy-making.