



An Australian Government Initiative



Freight Policy Reform Program

<https://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/freight-policy-reform-program>

30 May 2024

Dear Dr. Schott,

Re: Submission to the NSW Freight Policy Reform Program

Regional Development Australia - Northern Inland (RDA-NI) wish to comment on the NSW Freight Policy Reform Program.

We represent a diverse economy spanning 12 Local Government Areas in Northern Inland NSW, representing over \$5.5 Billion in agricultural production. All of those LGAs recognise the critical need for efficient and effective freight infrastructure to support our region's economic productivity, particularly for our agricultural and business sectors that heavily rely on access to the Port of Newcastle.

RDA Northern Inland encompasses a significant portion of Northern Inland NSW, including Armidale, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth Regional, Tenterfield, Uralla, and Walcha. Each of these areas contributes uniquely to the economic fabric of our region, primarily through agriculture, manufacturing, and mining. However, the current freight infrastructure and policies pose significant challenges, hindering efficiency and economic potential.

RDA-NI recognises the important role of the Port of Newcastle for our economy and strongly recommends the Panel review policies around supporting other ports.

Transporting commodities to Port Botany, Port of Brisbane, and Port Kembla, from our region, increases the cost of freight, the freight miles travelled and the carbon emissions. This increases operational costs and extends transit times, thereby affecting the competitiveness of our businesses.

For instance, in Moree Plains, there would be a \$38.80 savings per TEU if the Port of Newcastle container terminal was recognised, with a reduction of 2656 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually. Liverpool Plains would save \$111.10 per TEU, facilitating 520,000 container tonnes leaving the region each year. Narrabri would see \$548.40 savings per TEU, with a significant reduction of 11,974 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. In Tamworth, the savings would be \$581.90 per TEU, enhancing environmental sustainability with a reduction of 792 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually. Currently, 21,276 container tonnes leave Gwydir each year, emphasising the need for efficient freight solutions.

Immediate recognition of the Port of Newcastle as a container terminal is imperative as it provides a more direct, cost-effective route to and from market compared to Botany and Kembla. This change

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would enhance the economic viability of operations across Northern Inland NSW, reducing transit times and operational costs.

To support efficient freight movement, minor improvements in both road and rail infrastructure connecting Northern Inland to Newcastle are essential. This includes enhancing the axle load capacity to 25 TAL on critical segments and ensuring connectivity between Inland Rail and the Narrabri-Newcastle corridor. Upgrading key highways such as the Newell Highway, Kamilaroi Highway, and New England Highway to allow access for Performance Based Standard Vehicles is crucial for safety and efficiency. Other works, expected in routine RfNSW scheduling would include additional overtaking lanes, bridge widening to new standards, and safe turn lanes off State Highways.

Continuing to support and incentivise intermodal hubs in strategic locations like Tamworth, Werris Creek, Narrabri to facilitate better integration between road and rail will optimise overall freight logistics in NSW.

A shift from road to rail for long-haul freight is necessary to lower emissions and improve logistical efficiency.

Effective land use planning is vital to prevent future bottlenecks and ensure the efficient operation of freight logistics. Formal incorporation of freight needs into local and regional development plans, ensuring adequate industrial land with highway frontage to support economic growth, is necessary.

The current state of NSW's freight infrastructure, particularly around Port Botany, significantly hinders our ability to operate efficiently. By implementing these recommendations, we can enhance the efficiency and sustainability of our operations, benefiting not only the Northern Inland region but also the broader NSW freight and logistics sector.

We look forward to the opportunity to tour you around our region to directly address these issues and explore viable solutions that can support our businesses and communities.

Thank you for your consideration,

Yours sincerely,

