

The NSW Freight Transport Advisory Council (FTAC) provides strategic advice to the New South Wales (NSW) Government on freight transport strategies, policies and projects in NSW. Chaired by Duncan Gay, the Council also provides a link between the Minister for Transport and the freight transport sector.

The first FTAC meeting for 2025 commenced with the Chair noting the changes in ministerial responsibility, welcoming the appointment of Hon. John GRAHAM, MLC, as the new Minister for Transport, whilst expressing positive sentiments on behalf of the Council, for the significant efforts made by the previous Minister, Hon. Jo HAYLEN, MP. The Chair also noted the appointment of Hon. Jenny AITCHISON, MP as Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport, and commended her active engagement and attentiveness to the concerns of the freight community.

The changes to Cabinet portfolios enable a strategic, state-wide view of the road network in NSW and a unified perspective of the freight task outside of Sydney. Minister Graham will retain responsibility for ports alongside rail and public transport, with a more integrated response between road and port authorities expected. The recent announcement regarding the Western Sydney Heavy Vehicle Rest Area and the ongoing roll out of green reflector sites in regional areas highlights the Government's commitment to provide a safe and connected road network for the freight industry.

Trudi Mares, Deputy Secretary, of the Planning, Integration and Passenger (PIP) Division of Transport for NSW (Transport) was welcomed as the new senior executive lead supporting FTAC.

Regional Network East/West Uplift (RNEW) Program

Minister Aitchison provided introductory comments on regional rail prior to the Council engaging in an interactive session presented by Transport. The Minister prefaced the session by acknowledging feedback received on the Freight Policy Reform and the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans indicates industry's perceived underinvestment in rail projects in Regional NSW. Reasons for investment strategy failures were discussed, emphasising the need to understand the problem from the perspective of operators and industry, and ensure relevance to users through a strategic, portfolio-based approach.

The RNEW Program's primary goal is to enhance east-west connectivity in the regional rail network. The program will address concerns about network capacity, reliability, and resilience, especially on key east-west and north-south corridors and identify a pipeline of works to improve the entire network operability and connectivity, rather than isolated projects.

A specific focus of the RNEW Program is the Country Regional Network (CRN). The CRN is a highly valuable asset supporting 17,000 passenger services (equivalent to about 40,000 coaches per annum) and transporting approximately 4 million of the 15 million tonnes of grain produced in a good year, valued at around \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion to the economy. Without the CRN, approximately 400,000 additional trucks would be required to support the freight task.

Investments have been announced for rail projects including the completion of Condobolin Rail Siding, Main West Bi-Directional Signalling between Wallerawang and Newbridge expected delivery 2026-27, construction of \$19 million Wumbulgal multi-use siding, and engagement with industry on the Gilgandra to

Coonamble tonne axle load upgrade (25 TAL) planned for later this year. Targeted infrastructure investments in Strategic Activation Precincts (SAPs) are also planned.

Members welcomed the RNEW Program and noted the opportunities it provides to view the rail network as an integrated and interdependent complex system rather than isolated components. Members observed the lack of coordination between modes, the essential need for seamless connection on and off the rail network, and access to the country network's sidings and terminals as key challenges to facilitating efficient freight transfer. FTAC members will continue to provide input to program development through further planned engagement.

National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy

Assistant Secretary Sally Todd from the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) Land Transport Policy Branch presented an update on the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy (NFSCS). It was noted the Federal Government is currently operating under caretaker conventions pending the outcome of the Federal election, but discussions on the NFSCS remain relevant as it is a product of all states and territory governments.

The first version of the NFSCS was released in 2019, setting out a national vision for freight systems and supply chains across all modes (road, rail, air, and sea). Since publication, disruptions such as COVID, extreme weather, trade disruptions and worker shortages have altered the national landscape, resulting in a review of the strategy in 2023-24.

Infrastructure and Transport Ministers are currently considering a refreshed Strategy and new National Action Plan in line with the recommendations of the review.

The refreshed Strategy complements state and territory plans, focusing on foundational research and understanding freight systems. There is now a need to move from planning to real-world action, embedding the Strategy in policy and decision-making processes. Collaboration has been strong with states and territories working in partnership and demonstrating a willingness to work on the actions that is likely to result in alignment across jurisdictions.

Industrial Lands Policy and Action Plan

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure (DPHI) led a discussion on the Industrial Lands Policy and Action Plan (ILAP). Released in January 2025, the plan introduces a statewide policy to plan, secure, manage, and monitor industrial land, replacing multiple policies with a single, uniform approach. The plan addresses the low vacancy rates for industrial development in Sydney and systemic issues in industrial precincts. The new policy aims to provide a framework for governments and stakeholders to understand future planning for industrial lands.

Four key actions have been identified in the ILAP:

1. **Statewide Policy (Categorisation Approach):** Establishes a consistent categorisation of industrial lands:
 - **State Significant:** Linked to state or nationally significant infrastructure.
 - **Regionally Significant:** Contributes significantly to local and regional economies.
 - **Locally Significant:** Smaller catchments within local government areas.
2. **Planning Policy Interventions:** Allows for intensification and smoother development assessment pathways for industrial development.
3. **Statewide Approach for Employment Land Supply:** Sets a supply target for industrial land.
4. **Employment Land Development Program:** Manages long-term supply and coordinates necessary infrastructure investment.

Employment Land Development Program

The Employment Land Development Program focuses on land already zoned for industrial use but not yet developed, aiming to understand the freight logistics network and ecosystem to identify opportunities for increasing supply.

The Program will guide investment decisions for infrastructure projects using a multi-criteria analysis framework, assessing industrial lands, strategic policy alignment and site suitability. The focus is on freight and logistics industrial land to address cost of living issues, with the Aerotropolis expected to play a significant role in providing industrial land in Western Sydney to address infrastructure needs and sequencing.

Members discussed several matters for further consideration by DPHI, with a primary concern being that designating industrial land as "locally significant" could lead to rezoning and repurposing, especially given the

scarcity of industrial land in Sydney. Members noted as crucial that all categories (State, Regional, and Local) have planning provisions to prevent rezoning, urban encroachment, and ensure that development around industrial areas are designed to allow for 24/7 operations. Members emphasised the policy should consider the interconnectivity between industrial lands, especially the freight corridors that link them, and protect the land along and adjacent to freight corridors as part of the overall system.

Roads Act 1993 Review (NSW)

The Roads Act 1993 concerns ownership, categorisation, and funding requirements for road maintenance. Objectives of the review include more contemporary use for roads and streets, faster local council decision-making, and a streamlined statute. The review is principles-based, aiming for significant reform and addresses key issues such as unclear ownership and responsibilities within the current legislative framework. A three-month consultation period will begin in the middle of the year, with an options paper developed based on initial feedback.

A dedicated email address has been set up for inquiries: roadsactfeedback@transport.nsw.gov.au

National Service Level Standards Framework (for roads)

Transport is supporting the Australian Government in developing and implementing a National Service Level Standards for the road network. In 2018 Transport Ministers agreed to develop a nationally consistent approach to categorising approximately 1.2 million kilometres of road in Australia.

The framework incorporates a hierarchy of roads, broad outcomes, and specific metrics, facilitating performance benchmarking between similar roads. Road categories range from nationally significant routes and arterial roads to urban, regional, and connector roads, with the emphasis on connectivity. Specific criteria determine road classifications, considering connections to ports, intermodal facilities, and other key infrastructure. Telematics data plays a crucial role in this process.

A key objective is to ensure consistent service levels across different jurisdictions and a network logic connecting key land uses, destinations, and hubs. This enables the identification of vital routes, performance benchmarking, and the monitoring of resilience and response times to major incidents. Data integration is essential for corridor planning, collaboration with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, and the effective integration of construction and maintenance efforts. The system also addresses local planning concerns by considering the significance of local initiatives and connectivity to broader networks.

Attendance

Minister's Office

- Hon. Jenny AITCHISON, MP, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Member for Maitland, Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport
- Christine Boyd, Chief of Staff, Minister Aitchison.

FTAC Membership

- Hon. Duncan Gay, Chair, NSW Freight Transport Advisory Council
- Hermione Parsons, CEO, Australian Logistics Council
- Neil Johns, Executive General Manager, Namoi Cotton
- Warren Clark, CEO, NatRoad
- Paul Garrett, Deputy Secretary, NSW (Sydney), Maritime Union of Australia
- Marika Calfas, CEO, NSW Ports
- Rick Dani, Head of Store Delivery, Woolworths Group
- Geoff Crouch, Executive Director, Ron Crouch Transport
- Austin Vella, Chair, Road Freight NSW
- Les Logue, General Manager, BlueStar Global
- Ben Pratt, Director Corporate Affairs, Qube Holdings (for Paul Digney)
- Wade Lewis, President, Livestock Bulk and Rural Carriers Association
- Scott Walker, Head of Transport ANZ, Mondiale VGL
- Michael Gallacher, CEO, Ports Australia (Apology)
- Caroline Wilkie, CEO, Australasian Railway Association

Transport for NSW Representatives

- Trudi Mares, Deputy Secretary, Planning Integration and Passenger (PIP)
- Sally Webb, Deputy Secretary, Safety, Policy, Environment & Regulation (SPER)
- Scott Greenow, Executive Director Freight, PIP
- Ruth Graham, Executive Director Policy, SPER
- Bianca Slack-Smith, Director Policy and Regulatory Reform, SPER
- Angie Francisco, A/Director Customer Engagement and Delivery, PIP
- Simon Hunter, Chief Transport Planner PIP
- Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration & Place, PIP
- Graham Richardson, Director Land Use, Network & Place Planning
- Luke McGregor, Director Strategy Development, PIP

Guest Presenters

- Tom Loomes, Executive Director, Strategic Planning & Policy, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
- Kate Speare, Director State Infrastructure Policy and Agreements DPHI
- Jessica Farrell, Director, Metro and Cities Strategic Planning, DPHI
- Sally Todd, Assistant Secretary, Land Transport Policy Branch, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
- Lex Vaccarella, Director Freight Policy DITRDCA
- Ruth Graham, Executive Director Transport Policy, Safety Policy Environment & Regulation (SPER)
- Mark Rowland, Director Integrated Network Planning & Programs, PIP

APOLOGIES

Minister's Office

- Hon. John GRAHAM, MLC Member of the Legislative Council, Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

FTAC Members

- Craig Carmody, CEO, Port of Newcastle
- Alex Claassens, National Secretary, Rail, Tram & Bus Union
- Richard Olsen, NSW State Secretary, Transport Workers Union
- Paul Digney, Managing Director, Qube
- Andrew Harding, Chair, Freight on Rail Group

Transport for NSW

- Matt Fuller, Deputy Secretary Deputy Secretary Road Maintenance and Resilience (RMR)

FTAC Secretariat

- Emily Gallagher, A/Senior Manager Customer Engagement, Freight Branch
- Charith De Silva, Senior Stakeholder Engagement Officer, Freight Branch

Contact: freight@transport.nsw.gov.au