

NSW Local Roads Congress
3 June 2019
Congress Communiqué

The NSW Roads & Transport Directorate, a partnership between Local Government NSW (LGNSW) and the NSW Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA NSW), in holding the 2019 Local Roads Congress, resolved to announce the following communiqué.

The Congress recognises the critical role of Local Government as a provider of local and regional transport infrastructure in partnership with the state and Federal Governments. The Congress calls for immediate and on-going action from all levels of government to address the unacceptable level of fatalities, serious injuries and road related trauma on our road network, with specific attention to the local road network.

Road Funding

The Congress recognises the contribution of other levels of government in providing ongoing financial assistance for the management of local roads and infrastructure, particularly in regional areas through:

NSW Government

- Rebuilding NSW
- Fixing Country Roads
- Fixing Country Rail
- Fixing Country Truck Washes
- Funding for Road Safety Auditor training

Australian Government

- Bridges Renewal Program
- Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program
- The Current \$744.5m Black Spot Program with a commitment to providing \$60m per year after 2021-22
- Roads to Recovery Program

While the funding allocation for the Federal Government's Roads to Recovery program has become permanent and the base funding for the next five years has been increased, the total Federal Government funding program is \$700 million less than it was for the previous five-year program. This shortfall must be addressed by increasing the annual Roads to Recovery funding from \$500 million per annum to \$800 million.

The Congress fully supports the announcement by the NSW Government of a \$500 million Fixing Country Bridges Program based on the data contained in the Roads & Transport Directorate's 2017 *Timber Bridge Management Report* and awaits release of the Program details. The Congress also welcomes the additional \$500m to address the declining condition in local roads across NSW.

The Congress requests further information and clarification on the announcement by the State Government to transfer up to 15,000 km of Regional Roads back to the State in response to LGNSW's report on cost shifting. IPWEA NSW in conjunction with LGNSW asks for the opportunity to be involved in future consultation to ensure that the intent to benefit councils remains the top priority in the proposal. We also want to ensure that:

- roads that might be taken back will be improved and maintained with an appropriate increase in funding level
- any change in arrangements do not adversely impact other grants provided to Councils (eg FAGS grants) or the delivery of existing works for Transport for NSW (ie RMCCs) on the existing state network
- Council retains the function of being able to undertake works on any roads that are moved from an existing regional road to a state responsibility
- Individual proposals are the subject of consultation with each council involved prior to any changes being made

The Congress also seeks assurances that any roads not transferred to the State, will remain funded through the Regional Road Block Grant program.

The Congress fully supports the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) call for the Australian Government to commit to:

1. Secure annual Commonwealth funding for local government equal to at least 1% of Commonwealth Taxation Revenue.
2. Oppose revenue constraints such as rate capping and cost shifting.
3. Encourage councils to acknowledge Financial Assistance Grants as a Commonwealth untied grant to Local Government.
4. Strengthen Local Government's credentials as a trusted partner for tied Commonwealth grants.

Road Safety

Local Government plays a significant role in supporting road safety at the community level, with responsibility for almost 90% of the NSW road network. We recognise that within their existing means and current funding arrangements, Councils already make a significant contribution to road safety. Information collected by IPWEA NSW through the 2017 Road Asset Benchmarking report indicates that there are very few Councils that have adopted a Road Safety Strategic Plan as part of their suite of strategic planning tools. Road Safety Strategic Plans will allow Councils to give greater focus on improving road safety using a safe systems approach. IPWEA NSW has collaborated with Transport for NSW to offer training to all Councils in NSW to improve skills and capacity in road safety audit, and will deliver subsidised training in the preparation of road safety plans during 2019-20.

The Congress encourages all Councils to develop formal Road Safety Strategic Plans aligned to the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-20 and the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 to ensure that Councils are considering the road safety implications in all activities they undertake.

The Congress notes the assurance given by Transport for NSW that the NSW Local Government Road Safety Program (LGRSP) is currently a three-year rolling program with funding confirmed until 2021.

The Congress calls on the Federal Government to fully fund a \$3 billion annual Road Safety Fund recommended by the Inquiry in the National Road Safety Strategy. A fund of this size could help resource councils to contribute to other aspects of the Safe Systems approach beyond the Safer Roads component. The issue of restricting the use of mobile devices in motor vehicles through technology should also be researched.

Heavy Vehicles and Freight Task

Local Government is a major player in the supply chain as custodians of approximately 90% of the State road network. Road transport will continue to play a dominant role in freight transport, with the impact of the increasing freight further contributing to wear and tear on local roads.

The Congress calls for additional targeted investment to unlock local and regional productivity by improving access for freight vehicles and connectivity between local roads and preferred state and national freight routes. The Congress also calls for identification funding to determine key first and last mile pinch points as well as support for councils to undertake more extensive network road quality assessments. Rail freight investments must also continue to be made to help shift as much freight from the road network as possible.

The Congress calls on the NSW Government to accelerate the development of new Regional Transport Plans to inform strategy and decision making.

Roads Maintenance Council Contracts

The Congress notes the invaluable two-way partnership between Councils and the TfNSW in delivering Road Maintenance Council Contracts (RMCC) on State Highways across regional NSW.

The Congress supports the ongoing direct delivery of the RMCC by Councils for the TfNSW, noting Councils should not be compelled to deliver the RMCC via Joint Organisations. The Congress encourages the TfNSW to work with Councils and the Roads & Transport Directorate to develop and imbed the new TfNSW system requirements for the effective delivery on RMCC and to further build capacity across the Local Government sector.

LGNSW has also successfully lobbied the NSW Government for an increase from 12 months to 24 months for future RMCCs, which will help councils to better plan and manage the maintenance activities.

Disruptive Transport Technology

The Congress identifies that the introduction of hydrogen, electric and connected autonomous vehicles will impact Local Government and will require ongoing monitoring and review to maximise opportunities for safety improvements, productivity improvements, reduction in maintenance costs and the public good. This will include working together with the State Government on:

- the deployment of the technology on current infrastructure provision and maintenance arrangements, including funding arrangements and data sharing agreements;
- the additional challenges associated with the introduction of semi-autonomous vehicle technology in rural and regional areas;
- the unknown economic and social impacts of semi-autonomous and autonomous vehicles;
- the safety benefits of connected and autonomous vehicles must be closely monitored to ensure that improved outcomes are achieved across the entire vehicle fleet; and
- the inherent problems arising from the existence of a non-homogeneous vehicle fleet on the transport network are identified and minimised.

To further the outcomes of this Congress, the Congress calls on governments to take the following measures:

NSW Local Government

The Congress calls on Councils in NSW to:

1. Progress the Congress Communiqué by writing to the relevant Ministers and their local NSW and Australian Government MPs seeking their support for the Congress outcomes.
2. Continue to improve asset management performance by:
 - a. continuing to work with the Office of Local Government and the NSW Auditor General to improve the transparency and consistency of infrastructure measures within the Integrated Planning & Reporting framework
 - b. incorporation of a Road Safety Strategic Plan (aligned with the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 and in accord with the IPWEA NSW Guidelines for Road Safety Plans 2019) within each Council's Resource Plan
 - c. building capacity within the Local Government industry by supporting ongoing training and knowledge sharing
3. Support the employment of better techniques and the importation of proven technology to better meet our community's needs through improved engineering and construction methods
4. Develop robust workforce strategies to ensure the skills and capacity exist to plan, deliver and maintain local roads now and in the future, including cadet and apprenticeship programs at a professional and operational level
5. Advocate for place-based regional transport strategies that encourage public transport and active travel solutions in metropolitan and regional centres across NSW.

NSW Government

The Congress calls on the NSW Government to:

1. Develop a sustainable funding model for Local Government in NSW

2. Implement a system to:
 - a. Recognise the importance of qualified engineers and call on the government, in consultation with key industry groups, to implement on a transitional phase-in basis, a requirement for all local government authorities to have a suitably qualified engineer.
 - b. Recognise engineers as a profession, through a State and National registration scheme, similar to Queensland and Victoria, and as raised at the Council of Australian Governments in 2011-12
 - c. Support cadetships for civil engineering across all government projects, in order to ensure the long-term workforce capabilities
3. Accelerate the delivery of regional transport plans across NSW working in conjunction with Councils
4. Redistribute Federal Assistance Grants to regional NSW to address social equity and reduce the infrastructure funding gap, with a more meaningful rate charged on urban land so large urban Councils are not financially disadvantaged
5. Increase the existing Regional Road Block Grant and Repair Program allocations to reflect increases in the construction cost index which is well above CPI.
6. Implement IPART Review of the Local Government Rating System where LGNSW and stakeholders support the recommendations.
7. Initiate consultation with Local Government to establish a Freight Strategy to increase productivity and safety through targeted investment
8. Work through the TfNSW to support Councils needing assistance to achieve R2 prequalification to ensure Councils are strengthened in contracting to TfNSW to deliver Road Maintenance Council Contracts (RMCC).
9. Ensure that the implementation of future RMCC Contracts be direct with Councils and any other arrangements be made only at the request of the individual Councils, avoiding the pitfalls of a one size fits all approach.
10. Provide support for Councils to work with local businesses and communities to implement local and regional Climate Change Plans - particularly in relation to infrastructure.
11. Support Councils in developing and implementing strategic Road Safety Plans as part of the implementation of the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021.
12. Provide planning and funding for initiatives that contribute to the reduction of private car journeys across the state such as additional commuter and satellite parking facilities and car share services. This is a broad benefit initiative that will have a positive impact on road safety outcomes, reducing congestion, improving community health and optimizing asset useful lifecycle.
13. Improve systems for open reporting and sharing of data with Local Government including during emergency situations (e.g. road closures).
14. Continue to work with Local Government to develop a more equitable financial arrangement for the implementation of the use of day labor to repair road infrastructure when responding to undertake repairs resulting from natural disasters.
15. Strategically target first and last mile hotspots for enhancement as part of the freight strategy

NSW and Australian Governments

The Congress calls on the NSW and Australian Governments to:

1. Continue the funding to Local Government under grant programmes such as *Fixing Country Roads* and the *Bridges Renewal Program*
2. Build upon the *Fixing Country Rail Program* to target the reduction of freight loads on local and regional roads, including resolving institutional impediments for access to existing rail
3. Encourage ALGA to use its position on COAG, informed by State Local Government peak bodies and IPWEA NSW, to develop a new National Infrastructure Partnership for the three tiers of Government for smarter long-term investment planning in transport and community infrastructure.
4. Develop a coordinated policy framework that maximises the public good of transport technology (hydrogen, electric and autonomous vehicles) taking into consideration the current transport infrastructure capacities and constraints

Australian Government

The Congress calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Restore FAGs to 1 percent of the total Federal Government budget.
2. Find equitable and sustainable ways to fund infrastructure investment.
3. Review the formula for the distribution of identified roads grants, and end cost shifting by state governments
4. Increase funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following a natural event
5. Repair the shortfall in Roads to Recovery funding announced in this year's budget. While the base funding for the next five years was increased, the total program funding is \$700 million less than it was for the previous five-year program.
6. Address the potential revenue loss from the shift from petrol to electric vehicles by establishing a new user-pays system to replace the \$18.7 billion a year in road taxes

Australian Local Government Association

The NSW Congress seeks the support of ALGA to deliver the NSW Roads Congress outcomes.

Further enquiries:

Warren Sharpe OAM, President IPWEA (NSW) - 0409 398 358

Cr Linda Scott, President, Local Government NSW – (02) 9242 4000

Garry Hemsworth, Director IPWEA (NSW) – 0427 432 216

Mick Savage, Manager Roads & Transport Directorate - 0418 808 085

Kylie Yates, Director Advocacy, Local Government NSW – 0418 607 575