

# NSW Freight and Ports Strategy SUBMISSION March 2013



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Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

[www.centroc.com.au](http://www.centroc.com.au)

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Reference: kk:vp 031306  
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NSW Freight and Ports Strategy Team  
Transport for NSW  
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Dear Ministers Gladys Berejiklian and Duncan Gay

Central NSW Councils (Centroc) represents over 236,000 people covering an area of more than 70,000sq kms comprising the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Boorowa, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Harden, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin, Wellington, Young and Central Tablelands Water.

The Centroc region is the same size as Tasmania with about half the population and a bigger GDP.

It has two objectives, one around advocacy and the other around supporting members operations.

For more detailed advice on Centroc activities please find the recent Annual Report 2011/2012 on the Centroc website at [www.centroc.com.au/publication](http://www.centroc.com.au/publication)

The Centroc Board is made up of the 34 Mayors and General Managers of its member Councils who determine priority for the region. These priorities are then progressed via sponsoring Councils.

Transport is a priority for this region. Our members are responsible for a significant number of roads and bridges supporting the road freight task in a region which has watched the ongoing dismantling of rail. Freight and ports are very material to our agricultural and mining sectors.



In the first instance the Board would like to commend the State Government for its refreshing strategic approach when tackling the big issues. At the same time a trend emerging across varying strategic processes in NSW is a lack of engagement with Local Government. This region is willing and able to help with structuring stakeholder engagement with both Local Government and into industry where some members are well into this work for example the Councils working on the re-opening of the Blayney/Demondrille line.

Our members have a number of transport priorities material to the Draft Freight and Ports Strategy (the Strategy):

- Bells Line Of Road to Expressway standard with and capable of carrying High Productivity Vehicles with a focus on sequestering the corridor;
- Support for the Inland Corridor for high speed rail;
- Support for resourcing of road deficiencies, rail infrastructure and intermodal facilities. This includes the Blayney/Demondrille Line and
- Support for the Maldon Dombarton Line.

In the past there has also been support in this region for an inland international port facility to airfreight out of Central NSW. This is still supported and should be given consideration in strategic work going forward by the State.

With specific regard to the Strategy, there seems to be an emphasis on increasing the capacity of existing, intensively utilised infrastructure, such as the Hume, Newell and Great Western Highways, rather than considering a better distribution of freight transportation over a wider variety of road and rail routes. For example upgrading the Bells Line of Road and the Lachlan Valley Way.

To overcome the congestion surrounding Port Botany consideration must be given to the use of alternate port facilities, whether those facilities be located at Newcastle, Port Kembla or interstate. The use of freight options that reduce the need to travel through the Sydney metropolitan area should be seen as a priority while consideration should also be given to the fact that many rural commodities would be well suited for export from interstate ports which, in many cases are more accessible than NSW facilities.

The Strategy emphasises the need to improve road and rail access to ports in NSW. While it is agreed that development of Port Botany, Port Kembla and Newcastle should continue it is vitally important that equal importance is given to ensuring that freight travels to and from the ports in the most timely and efficient manner.

The nature of the transport task to and from inland NSW to ports logically suggests that rail should be seen as the principal means of conveying bulk mineral and agricultural products. However, the contraction of the NSW rail network over the last 50 years means that through closures and deterioration of infrastructure, there is insufficient capacity for rail to take its fair share of the task. The result is an over-reliance on road transport and the increased use of High Productivity Vehicles, up to and including the potential use of B-triple trucks, on selected routes. Greater use of High Productivity Vehicles significantly increases road maintenance costs and is a safety concern for road users. If this trend continues governments of all persuasions must resign themselves to constantly increasing road maintenance budgets. In particular the State Government must look to upgrades of the state highway network that include road widening, construction of sections of dual carriageway and an increase in the provision of overtaking lanes.

The Strategy (Case Study 15 – Page 106) makes specific mention of the co-operative process underway between five councils (Blayney, Cowra, Harden, Weddin and Young) and Transport for NSW regarding re-opening of the Blayney – Demondrille line. This co-operative approach towards reactivation of a disused rail corridor should be commended, particularly in view of the fact the line was built and remains the closest link between the Southern and Western rail lines west of the Blue Mountains and would serve as a logical alternate route in the event of congestion or service disruptions on either main line. However, despite a positive business case, interest from a number of likely customers (including private rail operators), and the potential to use the line as an alternate freight route to Port Kembla, southern NSW and Victoria, progress towards re-opening has been slow.

The Strategy specifically questions the way third party access regulations are applied to the regional rail network. In 2006, the Productivity Commission found that there is the need for a case by case approach toward the operation of low-volume rail lines. The regionally significant Blayney – Demondrille line presents the opportunity for such a case specific operational model to be trialled. If re-opening of the Blayney – Demondrille line can be justified the resulting model may serve as a template that can be applied on a state-wide basis for other disused rail routes and may lead to addressing of the current imbalance between the road and rail movement of freight throughout regional NSW.

The re-activation of currently disused rail lines such as Maldon Dombarton and Blayney Demondrille on a case by case basis deserves further investigation. A return to rail transport on lines where a positive business model can be established should be encouraged as should development of a framework designed to encourage co-operation between Transport for NSW, private rail operators and their customers. A revitalised rail network would greatly benefit regional NSW and potentially produce returns to the state government from currently disused assets. Transport for NSW should take little solace from the fact that the majority of their rail network is not operational.

Please contact Executive Officer Jenny Bennett on 0428 690 935 for further information.

Kind regards,



Ken Keith  
**Chairman**  
Central NSW Councils (Centroc)