



NEWSLETTER March 2011

South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc.

SEATS lobbies Feds

Recent reports the Federal Government may be going cold on funding major infrastructure projects fills SEATS chairman Cr Sue Whelan "with horror".

"We have a growing backlog of infrastructure needs across the country," Cr Whelan said. "For far too long infrastructure has not been given the funding priority it should have in Australia."

"A recent newspaper report highlighted that more than \$700 billion needs to be spent nationally over the next 10 years, just to return infrastructure to a point that would sustain national prosperity. This sends a very clear message that all Governments need to spend money on infrastructure."

"It's an investment in the country and in the community. Of course the Federal Government needs to make the biggest investment because they



Talking transport infrastructure at SEATS Port Welshpool meeting last month was SEATS chairman Cr Sue Whelan, Victorian Deputy Premier Peter Ryan, South Gippsland Shire Cr Jeanette Harding and Mayor Cr Warren Raabe.

have the most money."

Cr Whelan warns the Federal Government not to be fixated on a budget surplus. "While as a councillor I appreciate the need to be careful with budgets, at the same time I believe the Federal Government can afford to maybe not meet its budget surplus targets quite as quickly or by as much as it has said. Now is the time we should be building vital infrastructure."

She said this latest report, that the Federal Government is looking to cut back on infrastructure funding, puts SEATS in a very difficult position for its priority projects. "There is no other way to fund them," she said.

"I'm concerned State Governments won't invest as much in infrastructure as they need to either, and obviously they're highly dependent on the Feds as well. So the whole thing's a major issue."

Cr Whelan says she needs to sit down and have a good look at "all this" with the SEATS execu-

Deputy Premier pledges support

Victorian Deputy Premier Peter Ryan told the SEATS meeting at Port Welshpool last month his first priority as a Member of Parliament was to his electorate of Gippsland.

Mr Ryan, who is also Minister for Regional and Rural Development, then outlined the investment in infrastructure committed to the Gippsland and SEATS region. This includes:

- Contributing \$2 million towards Ancon's completion of Stage 1 of its Port Anthony at Barry's Beach (opposite Wilson's Promontory) for the import and export of bulk goods;
- Development of the Port of Hastings;

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tive, "and certainly SEATS needs to do some major lobbying. I don't think SEATS or anyone can just sit back and let it happen."

SEATS is also concerned the need to replace infrastructure damaged by the recent devastating floods in eastern Australia may impact Federal funding priorities for SEATS infrastructure projects.

"The Federal Government has already deferred some funding to Victoria as a result," Cr Whelan said. "We're hoping they don't do that too much."

"While we're aware of the flooding issues, we believe our infrastructure is equally as important and that the Australian economy can handle both lots of infrastructure funding."

"We're calling on both Federal and State Governments not to do too much re-jigging, but to be aware of the needs of the entire community."

She said should some funds be deferred, SEATS needs to ensure they are returned once funds are available.

SEATS is already expressing this view to Government at all levels, including to Victorian Deputy Premier Peter Ryan at SEATS' Port Welshpool meeting in February.

Meanwhile SEATS has been making sure all sides of NSW politics are aware of the infrastructure priorities of south-east NSW in the lead-up to the elections on 26 March.

"We've been working closely with the current NSW government and opposition to ensure that regardless of the election outcome, we continue to get support for the infrastructure projects we need in the region," she said.

"We've had a good response because SEATS has a high credibility with both sides of politics."



Peter Ryan continued from p. 1

- redevelopment of Port Welshpool's iconic Long Jetty.
He has also undertaken to ensure both the Princes Highway and South Gippsland Highway from Sale to Longford are on the agenda for improvement, and that overtaking lanes would be provided on the Strzelecki Highway .
He also said a Regional Growth Fund of \$2 billion would be established solely for rural and regional infrastructure in Victoria over two terms of government .

Princes upgrade pledged

THE NSW Coalition has undertaken to complete the Princes Highway upgrade Gerrinong to Bomaderry with \$500 million allocated in their first term should they be elected 26 March.

State Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell promised to complete stage one of the upgrade Mt Pleasant to Toolijooa Road in the coming term, and to start stage two being the Berry Bypass. He also promised to start work on the Highway at South Nowra.

Mr O'Farrell has had a copy of SEATS' election policies for some months and spoken several times with SEATS CEO Chris Vardon .

Input to National Freight Strategy

Australia's first National Freight Strategy was released in draft form last month for comment. SEATS will prepare a submission.

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese said with freight volumes set to double by 2030, there's a clear and urgent need for national leadership and long term planning to make sure transport infrastructure can cope with this greater demand.

It was developed by *Infrastructure Australia* and the National Transport Commission. A copy is on www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au.

Submissions close at the end of April.

SEATS adopts Business Plan

SEATS has finalized its Business and Marketing Plan for 2011-2014 after some excellent work by the subcommittee.

It was accepted at SEATS February meeting. It is designed for SEATS members and other key stakeholders and outlines key goals, projects and performance indicators to guide SEATS in its advocacy role over this period.

The new plan is on SEATS website .

Mine landslip closes Freeway

The Morwell bypass section of the Princes Freeway is closed indefinitely following a major landslip in the north side of the Hazelwood Mine face adjacent to the Freeway. Traffic, including B-doubles, is being diverted through Morwell township along Princes Drive.

Victoria Police with VicRoads closed the Highway on Thursday 10 February after large cracks and holes appeared in the road surface of the Freeway raising stability concerns.

The landslip is thought associated with prolonged rain. An investigation is underway.

Murray-Goulburn's freight task



Murray Goulburn Cooperative's Gippsland fleet travels 7.4m km a year. Photo courtesy Murray-Goulburn Cooperative.

Murray Goulburn Cooperative's (MGC) transport task is huge.

MGC is a farmer-owned cooperative producing 3.1 billion litres of milk each year, 34.5% of Australia's total milk production, and it exports its products to over 100 countries.

MGC's Gippsland Regional Transport Manager Brad Close is in charge of transporting about one-third of the company's milk from farm to processing plant and of a dedicated fleet of B-doubles that carries its products from Gippsland to distribution centres in metropolitan Melbourne.

He told SEATS delegates recently, Gippsland's road infrastructure presents his company with many challenges.

"The feedback from our drivers is the roads are in below average condition, from the Federally run highway through to local council roads," he said.

"This is caused by a combination of poor management, a lack of funding, plus recent heavy rain and some flooding in the northern and western regions of the state. This means the roads have become less than satisfactory.

"It hits our bottom line with increased vehicle maintenance, tyre wear and more fuel. We budget with road conditions in mind, but any savings from an improved road network would mean we could deliver more back to our farmer shareholders."

He sees the infrastructure priorities as:

- South Gippsland Hwy certainly from Cranbourne – traffic has greatly increased over the past five years but there has been little improvement;
- Princes Highway, Traralgon east to border;
- The major road link between there and Leongatha on the Strzelecki Hwy, particularly creating passing lanes;

MURRAY GOULBURN'S GIPPSLAND FLEET

- Transports 1.07 million litres milk p.a.
- Travels 7.4 million km p.a.
- Has 50 bulk milk collection tankers working 24/7
- 90% of road time is on council local roads
- 80% of road time on unsealed/partially sealed roads;
- Employs 200 people in driving and non driving roles.

Figures from 2009/10 financial year

- Then we have priorities within the shires including upgrading timber bridges, and mass limits on roads and bridges.

"We're trying to work cooperatively with the various agencies, and I think our priorities are aligned with SEATS," he said.

MCG invests heavily in vehicles and technology to try to lessen its impact on the roads and also on their vehicles and drivers. "It's an investment that pays on the bottom line," he said.

"We were the first company to use B-doubles in Victoria. We've been at the forefront of mass management and computerised scheduling to try to reduce the number of trucks on the road and make ourselves more efficient, and about 25% of our trucks now use Liquefied Natural Gas.

"Many of our innovations contribute to making a safe and enjoyable workplace, and many of our people have worked for us for many years."

Brad believes it is important for MCG to get involved to try to make change happen. "As a transport industry, we can't sit on the sidelines and expect other people to do the hard yards for us and wait for it all to come to us, so that's why we're joining SEATS. "We have to be in there trying to make things happen; I believe MCG can work collaboratively with SEATS to obtain a successful outcome."

Brad's presentation is on SEATS' website.

Gippsland key economic driver

Natalie Elliott-Perfrement of GHD summarised the key drivers for advocating viable integrated transport systems in the Gippsland region for SEATS delegates last month.

"SEATS members have developed a very well defined list of their strategic transport priority projects for the region," she said. "My presentation reminded them of the key reason for these projects and that's to support and develop sustainable and strong communities.

Her presentation included economic and demographic statistics on an individual shire and regional basis. "SEATS members know what's happening in their own areas as regards economic output and demographics, but not necessarily the same information about their neighbours."

She pointed out about 10% of Victoria's gross domestic product comes from the Gippsland region, a staggering \$32 billion per annum, "and that's even with the limitations of what we've identified".

She said the figures are "based on what we can find out" and 'the last round of statistics', noting a deficiency in accurate data on economic output by industry in the regions and data on freight and passenger transport demand in the region.

"Gippsland's natural resources drive the region's and Victoria's economy," she said. "We need additional links in both our rail and road networks to support the



Courtesy GHD, VicRoads, Wellington S. C.

region's current economic development and to support its anticipated future growth.

Gippsland's major industries include dairy processing, fruit and vegetables, agriculture and fishing, forestry and timber processing, coal based electricity generation, oil and gas extraction, education, wholesale and retail activities, and construction.

Natalie also noted the associated freight tasks to support these industries result in more than 6 million tonnes of freight per annum being carried on the Princes Highway alone.

On population growth, she said the population growth rates of Cardinia and Baw Baw Shires are in Victoria's top 10, and that's only based on the last census. "Our population growth rate since then has been phenomenal; I'm expecting we'll see another huge jump in this year's census."

Her presentation with detailed economic and population statistics is now on SEATS' website www.seats.org.au.

What is SEATS?

South East Transport Strategy (SEATS) aims to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport and infrastructure in south eastern NSW, eastern Victoria and the ACT. Its 45 members represent councils, industry and other organisations from Wollongong to Dandenong.

Advocates state-based

SEATS has formed advocacy committees in both states to lobby politicians and government staff about the region's infrastructure needs.

Floods divert funds

SEATS delegates heard at Port Welshpool the recent devastating floods in eastern Australia may affect Federal funding allocations to SEATS projects (see p.1). The Federal Government has deferred \$20 million funding for the Traralgon to Sale section of Princes Hwy for this purpose.

Change in SEATS Executive

Greg Miller (ex Tumut Shire) has resigned from the SEATS Board after moving to a new position at Port Macquarie Hastings Council. Warren Sharpe, Director of Roads and Recreation at Eurobodalla Shire Council, was elected to replace him.

SEATS meetings

19-20 May : Hosted by Goulburn Mulwaree Council in Goulburn.

18-19 August : hosted East Gippsland Shire, Lakes Entrance. AGM.

17-18 November : Hosted by Wollongong City Council and held at Wollongong.

SEATS Executive

Chairman Cr Sue Whelan (Queanbeyan City Council), Deputy Chairman Cr Graeme Middlemiss (Latrobe City), Sec/ Treas David Byrne (Cooma-Monaro).

Victorian representatives: Gordon Charles (East Gippsland), Cr Jeanette Harding (South Gippsland) and Cr John Duscher (Bass Coast)

NSW representatives: Cr Bob Stewart (Bombala Shire), Greg Pullen (Shoalhaven City) and Warren Sharpe (Eurobodalla).

Snapshot of South Gippsland

Last month's SEATS meeting was treated to a snapshot of the host's South Gippsland Shire.

Council's Economic Development Coordinator Ken Fraser said the shire had 28,000 people, 340,000 cattle. Yet its economy is \$3 billion per annum.

Its economy is based on dairy and beef cattle and support-

ing industries, horticulture, oil and gas, sand mining and a multi million dollar tourism industry with about one million visitors p.a.

He said recent developments included a Murray Goulburn upgrade, the development of an Education Precinct at Leongatha and developments by Burra Foods at Korumburra.