



Stoner hears SEATS brief

SEATS is well placed to make immediate submissions to Infrastructure NSW as soon as that body is created, according to Shadow Minister for Roads and Regional Development and NSW Nationals Leader Andrew Stoner.

Mr Stoner was speaking at the recent SEATS meeting at Kiama after being briefed on SEATS' priority projects within NSW. He congratulated SEATS for developing a clear set of priorities and its vision and Strategic Network Plan which sets out infrastructure projects that benefit the whole region.

He elaborated on the Coalition's plan to set up Infrastructure NSW should it be elected to power in March. Their aim is to create a body to develop a clear long term strategic plan for the state's infrastructure, modeled on Infrastructure Australia and Partnerships Victoria.

SEATS' PowerPoint presentation to Mr Stoner explained issues with the Princes Highway, Kings Highway, Batemans Bay Link Road, Barton High-



The Kings Highway was among issues raised by SEATS with Shadow Minister for Roads Andrew Stoner at Kiama.

way, MR 92 and beyond, timber roads within the region including the south west slopes, issues in the Bombala area and with the Port Kembla expansion.

Mr Stoner was also given a brief overview of Canberra Airport, Eden Port and the makeup of SEATS itself. This included the SEATS region and its diverse membership which includes local government, semi-government and industry organisations and various agencies.

Since the Kiama meeting, Mr Stoner has been given a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and another copy has been sent to NSW Roads Minister David Borger. It is also now on SEATS' website.

The PowerPoint presentation on SEATS priority projects had its first viewing at Kiama and was well received by everyone.

Many were involved in its preparation — Greg Pullen, Chris Vardon, Warren Sharpe, Bill Ellison, Simon Cassidy, Greg Miller and Dom Figliomeni. Greg Pullen coordinated it all.

Members asked that a similar presentation be prepared on Victorian priority projects. That will be undertaken in early 2011.

The lessons of history

You may well wonder what the Hapsburg royal dynasty of Austria has to do with regional transport infrastructure negotiations in Australia.

Well the Victorian Transport Department's Stephen Smith and Lachlan McDonald (something of a history buff) showed at the recent SEATS meeting at Kiama that councils can learn a lot from history, particularly



Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa (above) mothered 16 children including Marie Antoinette. Picture courtesy of Wikipedia

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Barton Hwy hits priority list



SEATS Chairman speaks...

Duplication of the Barton Highway linking the Hume Highway at Yass with the ACT has been accepted as a SEATS priority project, following an approach by Yass Shire Council.

This two-lane two-way rural highway also provides a vital economic link between NSW's south coast, the ACT and south-west NSW.

It is rated the worst highway in NSW in terms of safety. Many consider plans to realign the Highway a bandaid solution and believe funds could be better spent on duplication.

Queanbeyan plans for traffic growth

Queanbeyan City Council's Phil Hansen outlined at Kiama how they will cope with anticipated increase in traffic volumes to 2031. Part of that increase will be from the recently approved Googong and Tralee developments which will add 10,000 residential lots to the area.

The Road Network Improvements model showed improvement of Ellerton Drive provided the best option and significantly reduced the expenditure identified in other options.

Mr Hansen also said ACT and NSW Governments and his Council has formed a taskforce to address the issues of freight traffic across borders.

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strategy. They gave an entertaining and stimulating dinner talk .

While Mr Smith spoke about relevant Commonwealth transport and infrastructure funding programs available to local government, Mr McDonald spoke about lessons from the Hapsburgs.

Mr McDonald said the motto of the Hapsburg dynasty was 'Let others make war; you fortunate Austria, marry', and he reflected on how the Hapsburgs over 600 years extended their influence and acquired territory all over Europe. Their strategy was to build up strong alliances through marriage with other Royal houses and through diplomacy.

"That's what SEATS does very well, not through marriage of course, but through diplomacy, negotiation and influence," Mr Smith said. "It can be hard work, but success comes from planning and forging those strategic alliances. SEATS has a good reputation which puts it in good stead with funding and government authorities."

They also mentioned that \$573M is available for Regional DAs for infrastructure associated with stimulating regional economies across Australia.

"This represents an opportunity for SEATS to ensure 'shovel ready' projects are developed to better the chances for successful funding bids," said SEATS CEO Chris Vardon.

Our last meeting, hosted by Kiama Municipal Council, was an exceptionally good meeting, well attended and with good discussion. We were pleased Mayors and General Managers from the Southern Councils Group and some RDA members in our area could join us for much of our meeting on 18 November.



Cr Sue Whelan

We were also pleased to welcome Andrew Stoner, Leader of the Nationals in NSW and Shadow Roads and Regional Development Minister. We gave him a presentation on SEATS' priority projects in NSW which was prepared by several SEATS members . It is now on our website. Thank you to everyone who contributed, especially Greg Pullen who pulled it together.

Mr Stoner said he believed SEATS was well placed to take advantage of Infrastructure NSW should the Coalition win the election on 26 March. He praised the work being done by SEATS and encouraged us to continue taking a regional, non-parochial approach.

We are currently completing our Marketing and Business Plan. It was very encouraging to do a SWOT analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat which were well discussed by delegates. Robyn Cooney will now write our plan for adoption in February. We pre-empted the new plan by establishing Advocacy sub-committees in each state to ensure we're well placed to meet the right people at the right time to advance our regional priority projects.

Lachlan McDonald and Stephen Smith from the Department of Transport in Victoria once again provided us with an entertaining and very provoking talk on Thursday evening. They will meet with our CEO in February to update him on several issues discussed during the year.

We congratulate the new Victorian Government on assuming office and look forward to working with the Ministers and Shadow Ministers in the coming four years.

The NSW election is in late March 2011 and we will ensure every candidate in NSW is well versed in our policies and regional projects.

I wish you a very happy Christmas and hope 2011 is a good year for you.

Cr Sue Whelan
Chairman

We must invest in rail freight



Australia will not be able to move the predicted increase in the freight task without significant investment in rail infrastructure, according to Mark Williams of Sanmar Consulting. Picture courtesy Sanmar Consulting.

Governments have no choice but step in and work to revitalize rail freight infrastructure, according to Mark Williams of Sanmar Consulting, “otherwise private enterprise will continue to bastardize the system for their own purposes”.

He told SEATS members at Kiama last month a change in mindset is required at government level and he is optimistic that can be achieved. That will be in their submission on the discussion paper on improved freight rail investment policies released by the National Transport Commission (NTC) at the instigation of Australia’s Transport Ministers.

“Trucks will simply not be able to move the predicted doubling of the freight task over the next 20 years and the possible trebling over 30; we simply won’t have enough drivers or enough equipment to do the job,” he said.

“Rail has a role currently which mainly revolves around bulk freight, but it has to take more of a lead with export containerization, intermodalism and with other types of freight.

“The issue particularly in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia is the state of the rail systems where we have gone through say a decade of closing railway lines, letting ones that weren’t closed deteriorate, and not really planning our rail structures for the future.

“We sold off the rail system owned by the Australian Government. The Government created National Rail and then sold it off to private enter-



prise without adequate checks and balances which has led us to where we are today.

“When that happened I think our rail systems further deteriorated and we put a lot of rail market control into the hands of private operators who were more interested in returns to shareholders than in spending money on the rail systems.

“So now we’re down to very few rail operators, a lack of competition, and the system controlled by a few players. The Government will have to step back in and facilitate private investment in rail, otherwise we’re not going to be able to service the needs of the community over the next 20 years.”

Mr Williams suggested one way governments could do that is by funding operators to buy equipment so they can start to compete in the markets and open up some of these regional areas that are crying out for rail services they just don’t have.

At Kiama, Mr Williams outlined the NTC discussion paper including the list of 22 questions for stakeholders. Submissions from interested organizations will be received until 15 December. Since Kiama, the paper has been sent to all SEATS members inviting comments. Sanmar Consulting has agreed to coordinate a submission from SEATS.

Regional rail freight study

Mr Williams also spoke to SEATS about the proposed benchmark regional rail study. Sanmar has been assisting Transport NSW and Business NSW with information that will help formulate the brief for the proposed study. The study is intended to focus on the Southern Riverina area and become a blueprint for future studies regarding regional rail needs in NSW.

It is based on the need for strategically located rail freight hubs (intermodals) and the integration of rail networks throughout NSW. His presentation is on SEATS website .

Push for Illawarra Regional Airport

Illawarra Regional Airport at Albion Park services the area from Wollongong down to the South Coast.

Shellharbour City Council's Economic Development Manager Trevor James told SEATS at Kiama that council, as the airport owner, is very conscious of the need to promote and protect such a significant regional infrastructure asset.

"Council sees the airport as an asset that can generate employment for our area, hence the cluster of aviation related businesses established there that employ quite a number of people," he said. "It's growing, and we get constant inquiries about the use of the airport for a range of aviation related enterprises."

"An airport capability study had to be undertaken to examine the possibility of the reintroduction of passenger services, because that clearly will impact on the planning of the entire airport precinct.

"We had to identify what infrastructure would be needed to do that because although commercial airlines might consider passenger services not financially viable from Albion Park at the moment, they may be in the



Illawarra Regional Airport at Albion Park, with the Princes Highway to the right.
Photo courtesy Shellharbour City Council.

future. Therefore the site has to be planned to take that into account."

That study was completed in August 2010 with council working with other regional stakeholders on forward planning.

The study gathered information for a Master Plan, assessed the technical capacity of the airport, and identified infrastructure requirements to support various types of aircraft into the future. It also proposed a possible way forward.

This presentation is on SEATS website.

Kiama outlines transport issues

Kiama General Manager Michael Forsyth outlined to SEATS the major transport issues confronting his Council:

- poor public transport;
- poor inter-regional transport options both north and south;
- restricted freight options by rail with poor links;
- The slowness of the up-

- grade of Princes Highway Gerringong to Bomaderry;
- lack of passenger flights from Albion Park.

He indicated his Council supports the Princes Highway upgrade, the return of commercial air services to Albion Park, the Maldon – Dombarton rail link and the electrification of the rail line to Bomaderry.

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.

Rail study issues paper

An issues paper for the Maldon to Dombarton rail study is on exhibition, covering future freight demand, existing rail capacity, road capacity, environmental and heritage issues, and the cost benefit, financial, employment and funding analysis.

Princes Hwy upgrade

An RTA animation of approved works for the planned upgrade of the Princes Highway from Gerringong to Bomaderry was seen by SEATS members at Kiama. The Government has provided \$220 million in funding with work to start 2012.

Uniform rules for HV

SEATS will endorse NatRoads push for a single national system for heavy vehicle regulation.

SEATS meetings

17-18 February 2011: hosted by South Gippsland Shire Council at Foster, Victoria.

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

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

17-18 November : Hosted by Wollongong City Council 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 Greg Miller (Tumut).