

17th October 2023

A submission to:

Hon Danny Pearson, Minister for Transport Infrastructure

Hon Melissa Horne, Minister for Ports & Freight; Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Hon Tim Pallas, Treasurer; Minister for Economic Growth

Hon Gayle Tierney, Minister for Regional Development

Hon Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Public and Active Transport

With copies to:

- MP for Gippsland East
- MP for Gippsland South
- MP for Morwell
- MP for Bass
- MP for Narracan
- MP for Pakenham
- MP for Monbulk

And copies also to:

- MLCs for Eastern Victoria

Please find attached a submission seeking a Government approach to improve the Transport Infrastructure in the Gippsland part of the SEATS (South East Australia Transport Strategy) Region. These projects are sought to be advanced at the earliest opportunity to deliver freight productivity gains for industries located within south east Australia and in doing so will deliver regional economic development for the communities.

Access to ports and metropolitan markets, not only within Victoria, is a critical piece of the freight logistical puzzle and paramount for creating access to markets and providing employment.

The Executive of SEATS is willing to meet with Ministers regarding any project which SEATS has identified as critical to the growth of the region to provide additional information

Yours sincerely

Greg Pullen, Executive Officer, SEATS

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SEATS - Transport Infrastructure Requirements in Victoria's Gippsland

SEATS (South East Australia Transport Strategy) provides highly co-ordinated and influential advocacy for the development of transport infrastructure in the South East Australian region that supports sustainable economic development and the prosperity of its constituents.

SEATS formed in the mid 1990s, is an alliance of Local Government and other Government agencies together with industry that is concerned about the state of the freight transport network across south eastern Australia, including ACT. The organisation meets quarterly, has a paid secretariat and evaluates projects across all forms of transport that its membership has prioritised as worthy of Government and operator support.

Some projects have commenced either in a planning or construction phase. Some projects extend into New South Wales as well as the ACT. It is pointed out that much of the freight concerned is not destined for metropolitan markets but from manufacturing node to manufacturing node or to port facilities for export.

Your support for the transport infrastructure projects below, whether they are wholly within your Ministerial influence, electorate or outside, is requested so that a highly efficient transport network exists for the productive transfer of freight within Victoria and beyond.

Context

The SEATS region consists of several regional production areas. The Illawarra-Shoalhaven is industrialised with steel manufacture, production of chemicals and nutraceuticals, food products, building products, the NSW southern tablelands has strong agricultural production, quarry supplies and timber processing. Out of Victoria's Gippsland comes horticultural produce requiring key freight and transport connections into both Sydney and Melbourne.

The region has significant quantities of inbound and outbound freight, with freight travelling through Port Melbourne, Port Eden and Port Kembla dominating movement in the region. The movement of freight to and from the region relies on existing road and rail networks. Key freight corridors that enable the movement of freight into and out of Gippsland include the Princes Highway and Monaro Highway corridors and the Bass Highway/South Gippsland Highway corridor as well as the Gippsland rail line.

The continuous improvement of the Princes Highway corridor is of vital interest to SEATS as it contributes to the integrated approach that governments are taking across the transport network to better link ports with key freight precincts as well as key domestic distribution centres. The goal is to help create sustainable communities by providing a reliable and safe road network to access high value employment and social amenities.

Gippsland Rail Freight

SEATS strongly requests of the Victorian Government to undertake the necessary works to deliver the outcomes of Victoria's Regional Network Development Plan to enable:

- Passenger rail services between Traralgon and Melbourne of 20 min in peak times and 40 min off peak with additional trains beyond Traralgon to Bairnsdale
- Freight services to utilise the Gippsland rail line efficiently between Bairnsdale and Melbourne by ensuring sufficient passing loops exist to provide schedules/pathways

Gippsland Road Freight Corridors

SEATS strongly requests that for the Princes Highway Corridor that the Victorian Government:

- Achieves completion of the duplication of the Princes Highway from Traralgon to Sale by the scheduled date of mid 2024
- Continues the delivery of the Princes Highway upgrade program through the Gippsland region, including the Sale Alternate Truck route moving to construction asap
- Addresses the emerging transport freight issues:
 - To enable resolution of the Traralgon bypass alignment, this very important project for Gippsland, requires every effort to be made across **all** Victorian Government Departments involved to determine a way forward as soon as possible.
 - Transport infrastructure planning within Baw Baw Shire is important to this peri-urban area under the Victorian Government's Metropolitan Planning Strategy "Plan Melbourne 2017-2050". SEATS asks that the planning and development funding to ensure future options are not built out with incremental development.
 - Early planning and design for the Princes Highway through Bairnsdale, including across the Mitchell River to the eastern and northern town limits, incorporating improved traffic management practices at the Princes Highway/Great Alpine Rd intersection, are required to set the agenda for the future duplication of the Princes Highway from Sale to, and through, Bairnsdale

Continuous improvements to the following corridors with liaison with Local Government to identify local projects to enhance safety and improve productivity for delivering the freight task:

- Bass Highway & South Gippsland Highway, including access to the Gippsland Coast Offshore Wind Energy Zone support facilities
- Realignment of sections of the Monaro Hwy from Cann River to NSW border
- Realignment of sections of the Princes Hwy from Cann River to NSW border

SEATS is committed to achieving freight productivity gains for its region. With the co-operation of Government(s), this can be achieved on the larger transformational projects as well as improving access for heavy vehicles throughout the region.

Prepared and submitted by
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