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**B-triples, mass limits will demonstrate reform commitment**



By [Brad Gardner](#) | July 13, 2012

Opening up the Hume Highway to B-triples and increasing mass limits for trucks in New South Wales will signal a commitment to improving transport productivity, Infrastructure Australia says.

The group's latest review of infrastructure priorities calls on governments to demonstrate their support for freight through two test cases that have the potential to significantly lift productivity.

It wants B-triples given access to the Hume between New South Wales and Victoria and for governments to increase mass limits on access roads to the Chullora rail terminal.

"The highway and terminal are among the most important elements of any national freight network. Conversely, unwillingness to identify and resolve productivity impediments at these places would be seen as a lack of commitment to necessary reform in the freight sector," the report says.

In a letter to federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese, Infrastructure Australia Chairman Sir Rod Eddington highlights the importance of granting higher productivity vehicles access to the road network.

"Commencing a trial of allowing B-triple trucks to use the Hume Highway would be an important demonstration of an ongoing commitment to raising productivity in the transport sector," Eddington says.

Infrastructure Australia's report notes scepticism in the transport fraternity about governments' appetite for reform considering the limited progress that has been made over the years.

The report wants a core freight network created that gives priority to the most efficient and advanced vehicles.

"These would include heavy axle load trains and high productivity trucks such as B-triples on highways or trucks that carry two fully loaded 40 foot containers on roads to ports. Priority would include unrestricted operating hours and measure [s] to ensure timely, reliable freight movements," the report says.

"The network needs to be defined in relation to nationally significant ports – rather than some roads or railway lines that freight happens to use."

The report says governments need to genuinely engage with the community to communicate the case for transport reform and identify concerns and trade-offs necessary to win support.

"Unless we engage with the community on these issues, we will not achieve a social licence to operate. In other words, there will be continuing complaints about noise, safety and other impacts that will constrain the operation of ports, airports, freight terminals and more efficient freight vehicles," it states.

Infrastructure Australia says some decisions such as road user charging will be difficult and unpopular, but adds they are necessary to secure the infrastructure the country desires.

"Increasing the community's awareness of the need for such decisions will facilitate a more informed debate about how our infrastructure networks can help support our aspirations for the nation," the report says.

It is adamant freight must loom larger in the minds of policy makers, with

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

4

3:00 PM  
Check for overspend

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6

11:00 AM  
SCD001 scheduled service

3:00 PM  
Hire a temp!

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8

9:30 AM  
Chase drivers for fuel expenses

3:00 PM  
Consolidate fuel expenses

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10

12:00 PM  
Chase drivers for fuel expenses

Infrastructure Australia saying it "has been the poor relation of transport planning".

"This needs to be changed so that freight is included in best practice land use and transport planning," the group says.

"Planning effectively for freight will allow us to create a truly national, seamless freight network that enables products to move from ship to shore to door as efficiently as possible, with real productivity gains."

The Australian Logistics Council (ALC) has backed the Hume Highway and Chullora rail terminal proposals.

ALC Managing Director Michael Kilgariff says governments need to extend the use of B-doubles and B-triples to meet a growing freight task.

"As Infrastructure Australia's report correctly points out, B-triples represent a large upwards step-change in road freight productivity given their load carrying capacity, not to mention their fuel efficiency (per tonne) when compared to standard B-doubles," Kilgariff says.

"In this regard, ALC welcomes Infrastructure Australia's recommendation for a pilot land freight reform project on the Hume Highway in New South Wales and Victoria to enable high productivity vehicles to use this corridor."

Kilgariff says the proposal to increase mass limits on access roads to the Chullora terminal is a positive step the ALC hopes will lead to improved access to a larger number of key production facilities.

The report also cites the establishment of national regulators for the road, rail and maritime sectors as "historically significant" and capable of delivering billions of dollars in savings.

In line with previous reports, Infrastructure Australia outlines its priority list which includes four projects ready to proceed.

They include the Brisbane Cross River Rail, managed motorway schemes in Victoria, Pacific Highway corridor upgrades and stage one of the Melbourne Metro project.

The report lists the *National Ports Strategy*, which charts a 30-year plan for port and landside connections, as on the threshold of being ready to proceed.

Kilgariff says he hopes Infrastructure Australia's report will motivate the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to formally endorse the strategy and provide an official response to the COAG Road Reform Plan (CRRP) feasibility study, which canvasses new road user charging schemes for heavy vehicles.

Infrastructure Australia says projects such as integrating Sydney's motorway network, providing freight access to the Port of Brisbane and Brisbane Airport and the establishment of an interstate rail freight terminal in Melbourne's west have real potential.

The Victorian Government wants to build the terminal to prevent the need for some larger trucks to travel into Melbourne. It is seeking \$10 million over two years from the Federal Government to begin planning and development activities.

Albanese says he welcomes Infrastructure Australia's report and added that governments needed to do more to improve transport productivity.

"If we are to unlock new sources of infrastructure investment while at the same time getting the most out of what we've already built, all governments will need to step up the pace of regulatory and institutional reform," he says.

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