



Newsletter #02

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A NEW BEGINNING FOR TRANSPORT

Overview

Australia's Transport Ministers will meet on July 25, 2008, with a view to taking the first stage of the new transport policy framework to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in October 2008.

The agenda will include proposals for a National Rail Safety Regulator, a National Rail Safety Investigator, a National Road Safety Council, a national approach to maritime legislation and national heavy vehicle regulation, licensing and registration.

Progress reports from the Ministerial Working Groups will also be considered. The focus of this newsletter is on national rail regulation.

National Rail Safety Reform

Each State and the Northern Territory currently has different rail safety legislation and regulations. Australia has seven rail safety regulators and three independent rail safety investigators.

In 2003, the Australian Transport Council (ATC) asked the National Transport Commission (NTC) to develop a national reform for consistent rail safety legislation.

ATC and COAG agreed to implement the reform by 1 July 2007.

Industry View

Australasian Railways Association (ARA) Chief Executive Brian Nye has expressed the industry's full support for ATC's decision to consider a national rail regulator.

"Dealing with seven regulators instead of one adds significant cost to rail operations and hampers industry efforts to deliver a truly efficient rail sector," Mr Nye said.

"It can take seven regulators and nine audit staff eight weeks to complete an audit of a national rail operator. This work could be done by one regulator using two people at one quarter of the cost.

"More importantly, a single regulator will ensure all Australians benefit from the same high standards of rail safety wherever they live."

Victoria is the only state to enact legislation based on the model bill. South Australia is expected to commence the national reform from 1 July 2008.

COAG has agreed to extend the deadline for implementation of the model legislation until 31 December 2008, with a further 12 month extension for Tasmania.

Some states have flagged their intention to diverge from the national model bill.

National Transport Plan

As part of the National Transport Policy Framework, ATC agreed in May 2008 to consider proposals for a National Rail Safety Regulator and a National Rail Safety Investigator.

If Ministers agree "in principle" to progress proposals, they would ask COAG for the "green light" to commence a national reform process, including broad stakeholder consultation and a Regulatory Impact Statement.

Engagement on the right governance model for Australia has been very positive. There are a number of issues and options to work through; however, I'm sure we can find the best model to move forward.

Nick Dimopoulos, NTC Chief Executive

Useful links

National Transport Plan and Policy Framework presented to Ministers on 29 February 2008:

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/ViewPage.aspx?page=A02316402400420020>

Further Information

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