

Freight Transport – Keeping the Community’s Wheels Turning

Benefits to the Community

Every consumer decision you make is underpinned by freight transport: plane, train, ship, truck or pipeline. Consumer demand for products causes a “derived demand” for transport services, to actually deliver the products to the consumers.

Freight transport supports the quality of life desired by a community. But it plays an even more important role when it comes to a community’s health. It provides healthy foods, critical medicines and provides the sick and injured with access to hospital care.

The Economic Side of Freight and Logistics

Freight and Logistics operations in Australia are an economic activity in their own right, contributing around 14.5% of GDP¹ and many thousands of jobs.

Many families are supported by wages earned in this industry; when comparing the annual weekly earnings of these workers, they earned on average \$200 more per week than the average Australian worker.

In 2008 an average of 505,000 people were employed in the Transport, Postal & Warehousing industry, representing 4.7% of the total labour force.² In fact (according to Census figures) more Australians are truck drivers than are employed in any other profession.

An Important Link

Transport activities not only contribute directly on an economic level, but also indirectly by allowing other industries to operate.

Without transport, manufacturing businesses would not receive production inputs and supermarkets would be unable to receive fresh produce. In the year ending 30 June 2007, the total number of tonne-kilometres travelled was 507 billion Australia wide.³

¹ ALC, 2007 <http://www.austlogistics.com.au/dmdocuments/gdp2007.pdf>

² ABS (2008), *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, August 2008* (ABS cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)

³ BITRE, *Australian Transport Statistics Yearbook 2009, June 2009*

Australia's export industry also relies on freight transport. Exports are the basis of Australia's foreign earnings and the principal method of growing collective wealth. Australia is an island nation distant from major international markets and so requires world's best practice transport infrastructure and systems in order to keep costs to a minimum. This ensures that our goods not only make it overseas in peak condition, but are price competitive when they reach the shelves.

Industry Improvements

The freight transport industry is working on many ways of making itself quieter, more environmentally friendly, and less noticeable. In fact, some of these technologies (like those used to measure and prevent wheel squealing on freight trains) are becoming exportable commodities themselves.

The freight transport industry and the community need each other to survive. The industry is campaigning strongly for consideration of the interaction of freight and the community in government planning processes covering projects such as:

- Maintaining buffer zones between freight precincts and the community; and
- Building freight infrastructure that keeps heavy vehicles out of suburban areas wherever possible.

This sort of partnership will benefit everyone.