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Hon Warren Truss MP
Minister for Transport & Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Warren

Re: THE AUSLINK PERTH-ADELAIDE CORRIDOR STRATEGY

Thank you for developing this Corridor Strategy and for giving those affected an opportunity to comment on what will be a very important document for the future economic development of a large part of regional South Australia.

The '**Perth Adelaide Corridor Strategy - At a glance,**' under 'Key Challenges' states in the final point, '*Maintaining the flexibility of the transport system to respond quickly to the transport demands of major new mining and other projects.*'

There is a need for an investigation of the region of Eyre Peninsula (roughly the size of Tasmania) and the more than 600km of narrow gauge railway line and 7% of sealed roads, that service it. Combined with this is the unmined and yet to be explored Gawler Craton mineralisation that encompasses the region. Commodity prices, fuelled by demand from China and India, are now making this region a viable option to explore and potentially mine. The Gawler Craton is a huge, almost untapped resource that has lain hidden under a layer of sediment for years that will potentially rival other Australian mining areas. However the region desperately needs the infrastructure to realise this potential.

To link the existing Eyre Peninsula railway line into the national railway system would increase the productivity of the Auslink freight corridor considerably as iron ore, uranium, silver, lead, copper, gold and mineral sands mined in the region, and hopefully value added in Australia and then exported around the world, begin to flow.

Comments regarding specific parts of the report are as follow.

Page 3 - Rail

Mention is made of the narrow gauge link and acknowledging that this rail system plays an important transportation role, used extensively for the movement of grain and gypsum. Also that the future of this infrastructure is linked to grain haulage, new mineral developments and the use of the ports at Thevenard and Port Lincoln.

Over the past two years the Eyre Regional Development Board (ERDB) has coordinated an industry led investigation with the aim of providing a framework for capital commitment for the upgrade of both the road and rail networks on Eyre Peninsula and to secure funding support to rebuild key infrastructure within the region over a two year period.

Significant funding of \$15 million was secured from the Federal Government on the condition that matching funding was received from industry and state government towards rail infrastructure upgrades. The State Government proposed that the capital matching funds of \$5 million direct from ARG (Australian Railroad Group) be invested into the rail line west of Ceduna for gypsum mining operations only and that railway network be truncated at Wudinna and Kimba. A voluntary Grain Levy has been proposed to raise \$2 million over two years to provide matching funding.

Since this Auslink Strategy was completed the track west of Wudinna has been closed. There are now considerable more road trains carting grain on the Eyre Highway from Nunjirkompita and Wirrulla to Wudinna.

The investigations were grain orientated only and the mining potential of the Gawler Craton was not taken into account. There are a number of companies investigating mining possibilities on Eyre Peninsula at present and little consideration has been given to the provision of the necessary infrastructure to enable transportation of the various minerals to overseas markets.

Page 3 – Sea

The ERDB has engaged a consultancy firm to undertake studies of the Port Lincoln and Thevenard ports. The preliminary finds show that the future demand for the port of Thevenard and its infrastructure is positive in terms of its projected economic growth.

Illuka Resources Ltd has discovered substantial quantities of mineral sand and it is hoped these mineral sands will be processed at Ceduna. If Thevenard port is able to provide the necessary shipping facilities it would alleviate potential pressure on road transport facilities within the corridor.

Page 6 – Import and Export Task

In South Australia, BHP Billiton is expanding the Olympic Dam site and there will be a substantial increase in inputs and tonnages to and from Roxby Downs.

The Strategy currently only mentions the inputs to the mining operation and township but how are the outputs of the mine transported? This will be particularly pertinent when the outputs are doubled.

Page 6- Connection for regional and rural communities to their capital city

Air services also operate between the two capital cities and the major population centres on the corridor.

It is disappointing that no acknowledgement has been made of the importance of retaining affordable air services in the regions. Air services provide fast delivery service for visiting medical specialists, patients travelling to specialists and major hospitals, as well specialist freight and business travellers. Regional communities are severely disadvantaged when these services are not available. Tourism potential can not be overlooked.

Page 12 – Expected Growth

Along the section between Norseman and Ceduna, the number of trucks is expected to exceed the number of cars sometime during the timeframe of this strategy.

The Strategy acknowledges (page 15) that the Eyre Highway pavement between the WA/SA border and Penong is narrow and is not the desirable width for roads trains, particularly in combination with tourist traffic(especially cars towing caravans).

The Eyre Highway has been undergoing a painfully slow road widening process for many years and there still a considerable distance that has to be upgraded. It may not be possible to plan for such upgrades years in advance as typically there is a relatively short period between the decision to develop a mine and it being brought into operation. Therefore it is imperative to have the flexibility and capacity to respond quickly when required.

Page 13 Ability of corridor to manage forecast demand

Growth in demand will accelerate the need for progressive modernisation of the road corridor over the next 25 years, including improvements such as intersection and geometric improvements, main street treatments, townsite bypasses, improved overtaking opportunities, improved communications, and more rest areas with better facilities.

It is unfortunate that previous expenditure of road and rail infrastructure has resulted in a backlog of maintenance and upgrades. It would be detrimental if toll roads were considered an option for the Perth-Adelaide corridor upgrades as it would have a negative effect on intrastate travel and would increase freight costs which then get passed onto the consumers.

Page 14 Short Term Corridor Deficiencies

Roadside rest areas – the number and quality of roadside rest areas along this corridor, particularly between Norseman and Ceduna, are not conducive to improving fatigue management outcomes.

There are roadhouses every 160 kms for rest areas, a formula that has worked since the dirt road when services were approximately 100 miles apart. Unfortunately where there are roadside rest areas with rubbish facilities they often appear to have not been used and in remote areas it is difficult and expensive to prevent vandalism and provide consistently clean facilities.

I am aware that the Outback Areas Trust already spends a considerable percentage of their budget to provide clean rest areas and toilets for mainly tourists. One issue that does need to be addressed is the demand for waste sullage depots for the increasing number of travellers who have on-board toilet and shower facilities. Using public toilets to dump the waste from these systems, which in the majority of instances are septic tank systems, kills the bacteria and the toilet system then has to be pumped out. This is proving to be a costly exercise. Therefore if more public rest areas and waste sullage depots are installed it is important that annual running costs are considered not only initial capital costs. These costs must not be put back on local businesses and communities.

Communication Facilities for contacting emergency services – there is no mobile phone coverage along most of the route, and telephones are only available at roadhouses.

CDMA coverage is provided most of the way on the SA side, west from Ceduna. There are some gaps but there is coverage at Penong, Yalata, Nullarbor and WA/SA border. There also maybe coverage at Nundroo but I have been unable to confirm this.

The current access difficulties faced by digital phones in the country will in the main be overcome when Telstra roll out the 3G 850 coverage and all mobile phone technology is the same or so we are told.

Access to emergency services in remote areas – on-road emergency landing areas for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

I have been advised that there is only one on-road strip this side of the WA/SA border.

Page 15 Short Term Corridor Deficiencies

Narrow pavement, especially between Southern Cross and Coolgardie and between the WA/SA border and Penong, SA – the current sealed pavement is not to the desirable width for road trains, particularly in combination with tourist traffic (especially cars towing caravans). The road follows the coast in flat terrain and is often exposed to strong cross winds, presenting a particular hazard when road trains meet or overtake caravans. The narrow width also contributes to broken seal edges, edge ruts and other pavement damage, exacerbating the problem.

This road is now the narrowest since the widening of the road from Port Augusta to Penong. The strong winds generated by the sea-breeze effect on the flat terrain, is a real concern and a safety issue to caravans and road trains. The SES is constantly called out to pickup the pieces.

As a result of the current mining boom wide-loads of mining machinery are regularly being transported along the Eyre Highway. I doubt if this will decrease in the short term.

Page 17 Table 1 Summary of Corridor Short-Term Deficiencies

Safety at road/rail level crossings – Kimba, Ceduna and west of Kalgoorlie.

No particulars of the road/rail crossing safety concerns and issues have been detailed in this report. I have been advised both crossings at Ceduna have lights and that both the District Council of Ceduna and Kimba are unaware of any concerns.

Without more information it is difficult to justify the need for upgrading the Kimba and Ceduna road/rail crossings, particularly in the short term. However the Eyre Highway is being shifted to accommodate the Marina and this may present an opportune time for at least one crossing at Ceduna to be further upgraded.

The Port Augusta Bridge and the bridge over the railway near Mackay Street represent critical links in the corridor and require retrofitting to address inadequacies identified during risk assessment for damage during an earthquake.

The capacity of the bridge and the congestion and conflict associated with mixed traffic and seasonal traffic influx is a more critical issue – consideration should be given to building an alternative bridge, possibly each carrying one way traffic.

Yorkey's Crossing does not provide all weather proof alternative or access at present and this should have a high priority.

Port Augusta is not only a critical transport corridor for east-west traffic it is also a vital conduit for Eyre Peninsula produce, tourists and general traffic therefore a continuous and safe thoroughfare is very important to the Region.

The report makes no mention of the ferry that is going to be operating from Lucky Bay near Cowell to Wallaroo by Christmas this year. There are expected to be two ferries eventually, providing 8 return trips per day. They will provide an alternate shorter route to Melbourne and Adelaide for many road users to and from Western Australia as well as Eyre Peninsula. The ferry will be capable of ferrying 10 trucks plus 50 cars and 300 passengers per trip and will reduce the road travel time to Adelaide by at least 3 hours if travelling one way.

Pavement marking on some crest on the Eyre Highway in SA needs to be upgraded. Several culverts between Penong and Port Augusta do not extend beyond the road should which is undesirable.

It is disappointing that such elementary upgrades as these were not attended to as part of the road widening process that has been occurring for the last number of years. Therefore they should receive priority in being dealt with.

Rail transport from mining developments in the north of SA will cause additional train delays between Adelaide and Tarcoola due to some remaining short crossing loops and some long distances between crossing loops.

Has the potential mining that is currently being explored by numerous companies on Eyre Peninsula been included in this study?

Page 19 Corridor Challenges

*Maintaining the flexibility of the transport system in the corridor to respond quickly to the transport demands of major new mining and other project. Refer also to **Page 6 Import and Export Task***

Mention is made that the Olympic Dam copper and uranium mine at Roxby Downs is close to Pimba on the interstate rail line and on the Stuart Highway which links into the corridor at Pt Augusta. The expansion of the mine will result in a substantial increase in tonnage per year.

I also bring to your attention the proposal that the road from Wirrulla on the Eyre Highway to Glendambo on the Stuart Highway be sealed as it is a significant short cut. It is only 313 kms compared with Wirrulla via Port August to Glendambo of 665 kms. A number of mining companies are taking equipment from mines in WA to

mines in SA and back and find this extra 352km detour an additional impost in time and money that they would like to see rectified as soon as possible.
Wirrulla via Glendambo to Pimba is 428 kms or Wirrulla via Port August to Pimba is 550 kms and are lesser options.

The Strategy should be factoring in the announcement this week of Oxiana's Prominent Hill copper and gold mine being the next big project which is south east of Coober Pedy and north of Glendambo.

A road from Wirrulla to Glendambo would also be an amenity for those working in the mines (not all those who work in the mines are high flyers, there are still the above the ground, site and service workers) as it would provide a short cut to the coast at Venus Bay, Streaky Bay and Ceduna where many will have their permanent homes.

It would also be a tourist bypass to reduce the busier section mentioned around Port Augusta and down to Adelaide.

Your further investigation and consideration of the factors mentioned herein would be appreciated by the people of this region and the many more who will potentially come here for jobs in the expanding mining industries.

Yours sincerely,



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