**Submission – Heavy Vehicle Reform Interim Report**

*A citizen's reflection from regional Western Australia*

The interim report presents a clear and practical pathway to improving the efficiency and productivity of Australia's freight system. Reducing administrative friction, improving access, and enabling new vehicle technologies are all sensible directions.

From a regional perspective, however, two broader considerations may be worth holding alongside these reforms.

The first relates to infrastructure as a shared, long-term asset. Much of the road network that supports freight — particularly in regional areas — is publicly funded and maintained, often by local and state governments. As access expands and vehicle productivity increases, the cumulative impact on infrastructure use, maintenance, and lifecycle costs becomes more significant. While the report outlines potential economic and productivity gains, it would be helpful to better understand how these gains translate into support for the infrastructure that sustains them, and how costs are shared across users of the network over time.

The second relates to how we design infrastructure for the future, particularly in the transition to electric heavy vehicles and charging systems. This presents a useful opportunity. Rather than developing infrastructure for a single purpose — such as heavy vehicles alone — there may be value in considering more integrated, common-use systems that can serve multiple users across regions.

In vast and remote areas such as the Nullarbor, infrastructure needs to work harder to justify its development. Designing charging, energy, and service points to support a broader mix of users — including freight, light vehicles, local communities, and small-scale industry — may improve overall use, reduce duplication, and support more resilient outcomes. Over time, such infrastructure may come to function as shared energy and service nodes, rather than single-purpose refuelling points. Shared infrastructure of this kind may also offer better returns on public investment while supporting wider economic participation.

There may also be value in considering how such infrastructure is governed. Where critical systems are developed with significant public investment, it may be important to ensure they remain broadly accessible, rather than becoming narrowly optimised for a single group of users. This is not to exclude private participation, but to support long-term public benefit alongside commercial viability.

More broadly, the report prompts a reflection on the structure of freight demand itself. Improving freight efficiency is important, but so too is the question of how much movement is required, and whether better coordination — particularly for small and medium enterprises and regional producers — might reduce unnecessary duplication over time. While road access and vehicle efficiency matter, many of the largest gains in freight systems are determined before trucks are on the road, through planning, coordination, and information-sharing. To the extent that freight demand reflects these upstream decisions, improvements in system-wide coordination may complement the reforms proposed in this report.

Advances in data and digital systems may offer opportunities to improve visibility and coordination across local, state, and national levels, reducing fragmentation and supporting more inclusive participation in the freight system.

These reflections are offered in response to the Commission's requests for input on infrastructure impacts and charging systems, and in the spirit of complementing the report's practical recommendations with a longer-term view of system design — one that considers not only how we move goods more efficiently, but how we ensure the benefits of productivity are shared, and the supporting infrastructure remains sustainable, equitable, and resilient over time.

Warm regards,

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