



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**12 July, 2016**

## **VTA calls for fairness on Western Distributor tolling and inner west curfews**

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA) has encouraged Transurban and the Victorian Government to apply a reasonable fairness test in relation to tolls and heavy vehicles in the inner west, regarding the proposed Western Distributor and road access to the Port of Melbourne.

In his address to 130 attendees at the VTA's annual Port Outlook seminar, CEO Peter Anderson said that access to the port remains a major issue for the VTA and its members, and that notwithstanding road and infrastructure upgrades, "looming barriers" barriers remain.

"Chief among these are a concerning rise in opposition to trucks and heavy vehicles in communities near the port, and across the community in general, Mr Anderson said.

"Unfortunately it seems that as construction of the West Gate Distributor and the Western Distributor start to take shape, there are amplified calls for more curfews and bans on heavy vehicles that service the port."

The VTA has a history of working constructively with community groups to address their concerns about heavy vehicle movements. In the past, structured dialogue with these groups has helped to overcome these concerns.

"However, what many groups fail to acknowledge is that heavy vehicles servicing the port are vital for strengthening our economy. They are needed to get goods from ships to road and rail networks, and eventually to their customers and end consumers, for our economy to prosper.

"We hope that through continued dialogue with community groups we can find constructive solutions, and strike a sensible balance between amenity concerns, with the reality that heavy vehicles have a right to use the road network."

Mr Anderson said the Western Distributor toll road and the West Gate Distributor will help to create better and more direct access to the port, and are vital for getting heavy vehicles off local roads and onto the larger freeways, where they belong.

"The VTA is in discussion with Transurban about a fair tolling regime on the Western Distributor that will attract trucks and heavy vehicles to the road," he said.

"This is especially important in the context of recent heightened calls for permanent bans on trucks because it is hardly fair to slam an unfair toll on a heavy vehicle when there are literally no alternatives. I know of several second tier operators that spend over \$1 million a year on tolls alone, so one can only imagine how much first tier operators are paying.

"Operators are very willing to use toll roads if their cost is offset by productivity gains. So we encourage all toll road operators to set realistic tolls for trucks, and refrain from pricing operators away from toll roads."



victoriantransportassociation<sup>inc.</sup>

Mr Anderson said as the freight task continues to grow driven by population growth and greater access to low-cost imported consumer goods, the industry is pivoting towards greater use of high productivity freight vehicles.

“This will create its own challenges in terms of building and maintaining the infrastructure to safely accommodate these vehicles, and educating communities that HPFVs are a vital to minimise the amount of trucks on the roads,” he said.

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**For further information please contact Brian O’Neil on 0411 055 284.**