

The present subsidy of the road transport industry has resulted in a huge imbalance in the cartage of general cargo between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane as well as between intrastate cities and towns. Up to 90% of goods are now being put onto our roads while rail is left to wither and allowed to run down until the lines are closed.

In New Zealand, a B Double doing the same number of kilometres as a B Double in Australia would pay 4 (four) times the charges and taxes levied in Australia. This is an indication of the huge advantages enjoyed by road over rail transport at the present time.

There are compelling reasons why this state of affairs must be changed.

1. Roads have to be built to a higher standard to cater for the 9% of road users who make up the heavy transport industry. The extra cost is being passed on to all road users instead of being paid by those who need the higher standard of construction.
2. Heavy road transport causes at least 51% of damage done to roads yet pays only 38% of the cost of repairs.
3. It takes at least 3 times as much fuel to shift the same tonnage of goods by road as it does by rail. E.g. 600 H.P. to move 43 tonnes on road, 3000 H.P. to move 1200 tonnes on rail.
4. This means that more than 3 times the green house gases are produced when goods are moved by road rather than by rail.
5. Extra waste engine oil has to be disposed of to a cost to our environment.
6. Heavy transport is involved in fatal accidents out of all proportion to the 9% of vehicles that make up heavy vehicle registration. E.g. they are involved in over 30% of fatal accidents on the Newell Highway, over 20% of accidents on the Hume Highway and 14% (increasing) on the Pacific Highway. The truck driver is not always to blame but when a 70 tonne B double hits a car the occupants of the car have no chance of survival.
7. The cost of upgrading rail is generally cheaper than upgrading roads and rail needs much less spent on maintenance than roads once the upgrading takes place.
8. There is now evidence to show that diesel exhaust can cause various types of lung cancer. Japan is going to ban diesel trucks in city areas . They will be replaced by turbine powered trucks using avgas fuel. Therefore more trucks on our roads will lead to more lung cancer.

It is interesting to note that a C.S.I.R.O. report comparing the advantages and disadvantages of road transport versus rail transport has come down heavily on the side of rail transport.

For all the above reasons we believe that the government can no longer have in place a charging system that will encourage more B doubles onto our inadequate road system.

The present charging system for Road Transport is estimated to be giving the Road Transport companies a subsidy of one to one and a half billion dollars a year. The same amount spent on upgrading rail lines would result in huge shift away from road to rail transport thus saving lives and oil imports. Please put in place a fair system of charges that does not give an unfair advantage to Road Transport over Rail?

Yours Faithfully,

Bundaberg Railway Historical Society.