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To whom it may concern,

Re: *Review of Regional Infrastructure Priorities*

I write on behalf of the Campaspe Shire Council to inform the review of Infrastructure Priorities for the Regions.

Council appreciates the opportunity to have input and highlight issues that are impacting the comparative advance of the agricultural and manufacturing industries in the Loddon Campaspe region.

The Shire of Campaspe is located in north central Victoria, about 180 kilometres north of Melbourne; in the heart of one of the richest and most diverse food producing areas in Victoria, agricultural production and its associated processing and servicing industry remain Campaspe's single largest area of economic output and source of local jobs.

The key agricultural industries of dairy farming, meat production, and cropping are today complemented by strong growth in industries such as viticulture and tomato production.

The availability of affordable productive land, raw product and a skilled workforce has made Campaspe a 'hub' for a number of international and national food processors, including Nestle, McColl's Transport (Tongala), Fonterra (Stanhope), Ky Valley Dairy (Kyabram), ACM (Girgarre) and Kagome, Simplot, Parmalat and Kraft Heinz in Echuca.

Strength in agriculture and food processing means a significant amount of freight is generated and passes through the Shire.

While globalisation has opened doors for producers and processors, it has also introduced new challenges. Australian companies are more exposed to the volatilities of global markets and must compete with low-cost regions overseas.

Government policy and infrastructure responses must seek to 'level the playing field' for the region's businesses and safeguard local jobs.

National and State freight and logistics systems play a critical role in the viability of the region's businesses. Freight and logistics impact the way businesses do business in Victoria, and in the Shire of Campaspe, and how they connect with their local, interstate and overseas markets.

Poor freight and logistics infrastructure and systems pose a significant impediment to continued economic growth and investment in regional Victoria. Continued investment and expansion in the agriculture and processing sectors remains at risk in Campaspe as a result of the failing system.

The following emerging trends are having the most impact:

- Industry need for Higher Productivity Vehicles (HPV) from farm gate, to processing facility, to market
- Limited Performance Based Standard approved transport routes
- Failing state roads infrastructure, including bridge structures/culverts
- Lack of an east west road network to support more efficient freight movements to processing facilities
- Lack of appropriate maintenance and road design standards that cater to higher productivity freight vehicles as well as increased traffic along key freight routes
- Inadequate government and industry investment in rail and opportunities for more efficient and affordable access to ports.

We also see a significant need for a review and strengthening of bridges and culverts across regional Victoria. The increasing size and mass limits of freight vehicles means that they are significantly restricted on which roads they can travel due to load limited bridges and structures. This is a significant issue impacting producers and manufacturers in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

In 2018, Goulburn Murray Water identified 450 structures within the Shire of Campaspe alone that are not suitable for higher mass limit vehicles. Consequently, having significant impact and placing restrictions on routes currently being utilised.

Road infrastructure is critically important to an effective transport network and plays a significant role in transport safety. This is recognised by the National Road Safety Strategy which seeks to implement the Safe System approach to improving road safety.

While the National Road Safety Strategy has adopted this approach, state road infrastructure is failing to deliver Safe System outcomes in Campaspe.

Failing state road infrastructure impacts travel speeds, vehicles, road users and can result in damage to freight; as well as increasing traffic on the local road network, further accelerating their deterioration and increasing maintenance costs for Council.

Local government is financially constrained in delivering basic road maintenance programs and consequently is unable to invest in network improvements identified under the Safe System approach. In order to implement Safe System solutions on local road's State and Federal government investment is needed.

Improvements to roads should cater for higher productivity freight vehicles as well as increased traffic along key freight routes.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight these important issues that have not been previously identified.

Could you please direct any further enquiries in the first instance to Andrew Cowin, Corporate Strategy Manager at the Campaspe Shire Council on (03) 5481 2260 or a.cowin@campaspe.vic.gov.au

Yours faithfully



DECLAN MOORE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER