



Regional rail and road networks inquiry

Public hearings in Newcastle and Wollongong

The House of Representatives Transport and Regional Services Committee will hold public hearings in the Pacific Room, Noah’s on the Beach Hotel, Newcastle, on Monday (30 January) and at Level 9, Wollongong City Council Chambers, on Wednesday (1 February). The hearings are part of its inquiry into the operation of regional rail and road networks and the way those networks link to the ports.

On Monday, the Committee will hear from a range of witnesses from the coal industry and groups representing the Hunter Valley business community. On Wednesday, the coal industry will again be represented, and the Committee will also hear from the Southern Councils Group, the Maritime Union of Australia, Professor Philip Laird and the Railway Technical Society.

Committee Chair Paul Neville said that Newcastle and Wollongong (Port Kembla) were chosen for the hearings because of the vital roles played by the ports in the global and national freight networks.

He added, “The current resources boom has heightened the need for the more efficient use of our transport infrastructure and port operations.”

“We will be asking witnesses about the future needs of Australia’s transport infrastructure, the growth in container shipments, competition in the stevedoring industry and the future development of Australia’s ports,” Mr Neville said.

“At these hearings, the Committee will also be interested in future plans for coal export infrastructure, planned developments for road access to the ports, and the role of the area south of Port Kembla,” he said.

“Over 130 submissions to the inquiry have been received so far, which reflects its importance.”

The Committee is planning to conduct more public hearings at important transport centres around Australia over the next few months. It is seeking the widest possible cross-section of views on the matters covered by the inquiry and is continuing to accept submissions. The Committee expects to table its report around the middle of this year.

Members of the public and the media are most welcome to attend the public hearings, details of which appear below.

Monday	
PUBLIC HEARING:	30 January 2006, 9.00 am – 1.15 pm
WHERE:	Pacific Room, Noah’s on the Beach Hotel, Zaara St, Newcastle.
Wednesday	
PUBLIC HEARING:	1 February 2006, 9.00 am – 3.15 pm
WHERE:	Level 9, Wollongong City Council Chambers, 41 Burelli St.

For **media comment**, please contact: Paul Neville, House Transport and Regional Services Committee Chair, on (02) 6277 4940 or (0419) 704 767.

For **background information**, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2352 or visit the Inquiry website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/trs/networks/index.htm>