

VIEW FROM CANBERRA



BIC MOVES ON CANBERRA

February 28 and March 1 saw suppliers and operators move on Canberra for one of our key advocacy activities for the year.

I have to say it was a great success and a sign of how far the businesses of this Industry have progressed and acceptance by all political parties that the Federal government does have a role in public transport and that our industry is an important player and contributor to the economy, environment and society.

Over 150 people, members of the Bus Industry Confederation and State Associations participated in the national Industrial Relations Seminar and The Technical and Suppliers Summit that were run in parallel and then attended an Industry dinner that included a number of Key Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Members and Senators.

Minister for Urban Infrastructure, Paul Fletcher and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Tourism both addressed the Industry, and their support for the BIC Research and policy directions could not have been better recognized.

I also had the opportunity to provide a speech and send the Industry message to the Members of Federal Parliament and from the ACT government in attendance about our message and expectations of the Federal Government, no matter who is in power.

The message at the dinner was based around three key priorities. The first was the retention of the heavy vehicle automotive manufacturing skill set that has been developed in Australia over many decades that still sees 80% of route buses and 60% of school buses built in Australia.

I recognized that the sector is highly competitive and all manufacturers, local or from overseas accept this, but at the same time emphasized that Federal, State and Territory Governments should also recognize the importance of retaining these niche manufacturing skills in Australia and the scope for these skills to be utilised in other vertical markets such as health and corrective services, the military and mining.

The second key point was that we are seeking federal government action to get on with reforming industrial relations laws and how vital it is that Australia moves on from the constant "election cycle" that seems to drive our industrial relations and reform or lack thereof.

Some of this IR reform that is required is not that hard or contentious, just caught up in a union versus employer campaign that is more about the next election than the interests of business and employees.

And the Industry asked a big IR question, we put it out there. It is a very big call, but in the context of our growing cities, our growing population and the increasing pressure on productivity due to our congested cities that we know is a reality in the next 20 to 30 years, should public transport be recognised as an essential service and be afforded protection from strike action similar to the London underground and New York transit?

A big call but an issue worth consideration and an issue that we as Industry should take a leadership role.



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And the final priority related to the future of our cities and regions and how we will move people.

We provided our ideas based on our solid research and evidence based policy platform on what the Federal Government should be doing in relation to making State, Territory and Local Governments accountable in relation to “city deals” and the future shape and liveability of our cities and regions.

We asked that Infrastructure investment, where the Federal Government has the real power because it has the “Money” to more focused and that all major road projects in our cities require States or Territory to plan it as transit corridors that direct people in cars toward using public transport, rather than just building more road space for cars to fill. A basic strategic way of thinking and planning

The role of the federal government is to provide a framework and the incentives for state and local government to plan and build our cities and towns of the future. This should be based around public transport achieving the largest mode share of daily trips in the future. An average of 10% of trips by public transport is not going to cut it by 2030 or 2040 or 2050.

As I mentioned in my last BIC Column, the BIC National Conference will be held at the Grand Chancellor Hotel Hobart from November 12-15, 2017.

It will be an important follow up event and update from the 2016 Conference about the future nature of bus and coach businesses. The NTC Futures Working Group will be a key contributor to the 2017 Conference.

The Conference program is already developing and the social events and pre and post touring options are being finalized. The conference is being planned to be a family, kid’s friendly affair, where we work during the day at the Conference sessions and we enjoy the company of colleagues and family at our social events. Mercedes-Benz and Scania have big things planned for Monday and Tuesday night dinners and we will see another magnificent IVECO Big Arvo Out event on Wednesday 15 November focused around Moorilla Winery and Moo Brew Estate for lunch, which will include entertainment, the opportunity to visit MONA, the Museum of Old and New Art, which has become one of the largest tourist attractions in Australia and IVECO once again are putting on helicopter rides for the afternoon to view Hobart and the Derwent River scenery.

Mark it in your diary

