

VIEW FROM CANBERRA



March 2017

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 an 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, which were run in parallel and then followed by an Industry dinner that included a number of Key Ministers, Shadow Ministers, Federal Members and Senators.

Minister for Urban Infrastructure, Paul Fletcher and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Tourism, Anthony Albanese both made addresses at the dinner, and their support for BIC research and policy directions could not have been better recognised.

I also had the opportunity to provide a speech and send the Industry message to the Members and Senators of Federal Parliament and to the ACT government present at the dinner, 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.

The speech recognised that the bus manufacturing sector is highly competitive, and all manufacturers, local or from overseas accept this. At the same time it was emphasised that federal, state and territory governments need to recognise 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



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in the future - 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 an Industry are taking a leadership role.

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 be more focused and that all major road projects in our cities require states and territories to plan the road as a transit corridor that directs people in cars toward using public transport, rather than building more roads as space for cars to fill. A basic, strategic and different way of thinking and planning.

The role of the federal government is to provide a framework and to provide 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, 2040 or 2050.

“City deals” are a mechanism that Industry thinks can work, but they must have balls.

The focus of the “city deals” agenda by federal government must be on planning and integrated transport solutions, public transport and buses and tripling the public transport share of daily trips.

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. The theme will be “Moving People - Mobility as a Service” and will focus on how Industry and Government will deliver future transit and mobility services.

Mark it in your diary.

Bus Australia Network

