

ASCIANO PTY LTD

REPRESENTING BOTH PACIFIC NATIONAL PTY LTD & PATRICK CORPORATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Subject - Railway Level Crossing Safety

Purpose

To provide the Parliament of Victoria Road Safety Committee with additional information on Asciano's suggested options to reduce the risk of level crossing accidents in Victoria and to support the initiatives already announced by Government.

Government Initiatives

Asciano (inclusive of its operating companies Pacific National and Patrick) is supportive of the recently announced initiative (February 2008, Australian Rail Safety Conference, Melbourne) by the Victorian Minister for Transport reducing the road vehicle maximum level crossing approach speed to 80 kph.

Asciano also acknowledges the value adding involvement and cooperation of the Victorian Roads Authority and the Victoria Police in recognising the road motor user behavioral issues and working with the Rail Industry and other interface organisations on level crossing safety improvement strategies.

Improved Stakeholder Cooperation

An unprecedented high level of cooperation is currently occurring between the road and rail industry and the respective industry associations and Government agencies not previously evident in relation to level crossing safety risk.

Continuance of Major Safety Risk

Since the submission of Asciano's original paper to the Road Safety Committee in September 2007, the risk of collision at a railway level crossing continues to be a major safety risk for the organisation with four additional level crossing collisions Australia wide (all in Victoria). These additional collisions resulted in one fatality and three injuries.

Options for Improved Level Crossing Safety

While it is not suggested that this problem is easy to solve or that unlimited Government funding should be made available, the following list is provided simply as a check list of actions for consideration:

Strategy – Long term strategy to eliminate level crossings in the Melbourne Metropolitan area and to reduce the number of level crossings in country and regional areas.

A similar long term strategy employed in the Sydney metropolitan area has seen the number of main line railway level crossings reduced to five.

Education – Develop and implement a major level crossing safety education campaign aimed at school children and road motor users.

Engineering – Grade separate where possible. Upgrade existing level crossing warning devices. Develop solutions to eliminate passively protected level crossings using technology.

Trial normal “road traffic lights” at level crossings in place of the traditional “lights and bells” approach.

Eliminate poor approach road interfaces with level crossings including roads that cross a rail line at anything other than at a right angle.

Road Advance Warning – Introduce “rumble strips” prior to any passively protected level crossing to force road users to slow and be prepared to stop if a train is approaching.

Introduce active advance warning signage that illuminates on approach of road traffic by use of solar power and infra red beam technology.

Enforcement – Introduce level crossing “red light camera” technology at crossings fitted with active protection.

Encourage Victoria Police to enforce existing road rules at level crossings and to employ a higher profile visible deterrent strategy at level crossing “hot spots”.

Encourage Victoria Police to ride on trains to observe “hot spot” level crossing rail corridors and road user behaviour. This is an initiative that has worked well in New Zealand and is called the “Cops in Cabs” strategy.

Level Crossing Behavioural Strategy – Support the Level Crossing Behavioural Strategy by funding and “in kind” support.

Lobby all other State and Northern Territory Governments for support on a national basis, in addition to the road transport industry, and the general community.

Road Transport B-Triple Strategy – Reassess the proposed or existing road corridors in relation to potential B-Triple road trucks interfacing with trains at level crossings.

Two key issues to be considered are the time it takes for a B-Triple truck to cross a level crossing and the road intersection infrastructure that may be adjoining the level crossing thereby potentially causing the B-Triple truck to be delayed and block back over the level crossing.

Locomotive/Train Visibility - Mandate that all locomotives and trains must be equipped/painted in high visibility colours to the front face of the locomotive or train.

Locomotive/Train Horns – Mandate a “minimum” warning standard for the sounding of locomotive or train horns to include a sounding of the horn (4 seconds) on distant approach and (1 second) on short approach to all level crossings.

Current railway safeworking network rules require the train warning device to be sounded but do not provide guidance as to an appropriate duration or intensity. Given consideration to environmental noise concerns, a minimum horn sounding policy could be employed at “passively protected” level crossings only or alternatively all level crossings.

Locomotive/Train Headlights – All locomotives and trains are fitted headlights and the operation of the headlights is well defined and a standard operating procedure. Most locomotives and trains are also fitted with ditch lights.

A suggestion is that the locomotive and train “ditch lights” be (over time) modified to incorporate the USA Railroad practice of having the ditch lights “pulsate” on the activation of the horn. This strategy will assist in helping the road motor user see an approaching train.

Summary

Much more needs to be done by all stakeholders to provide an adequate level of safety protection to road users, train drivers and passengers, and the community in general. We must eliminate this high risk to safety.

Recommendation

That this additional information be noted. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee.



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