

Speech notes for the Infrastructure Coordinator, Michael Deegan,  
at the GAMUT International Conference Dinner, Melbourne,  
Thursday June 3, 2010.

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Thank you for your introduction, and the opportunity to speak at this important conference.

- Since yesterday morning, you've heard from some of the most eminent people in urban transport from around the world.
- You've had a conference agenda that's been packed.
- Your expertise of transport and my current concentration on infrastructure are inextricably linked.
- Yours involves moving people, materials, goods – everything people need everyday in their lives.
- Transport, like air, water and food, is essential for day to day existence – without it we don't survive, we don't prosper and we don't grow.
- My role is broader – it's about providing platforms to underpin and expand the nation of Australia and build our international partnerships, especially with Asia.
- Without infrastructure that meets the needs of the nation, and its people, we also don't prosper and grow.
- That growth and that prosperity are also vital for our place in the region.
- In a recent trip to Europe and Singapore I observed the sustainable transport initiatives of some of our global partners.
  - Ticketing;
  - Pricing;
  - Timetable accessibility;
  - Land use;

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- Everyone has a metro; and
- Walking, cycling etc.
  
- I reflected on our country's recent past and also compared us to the massive changes in India and China.
  
- For more than the first century of European settlement of this land, Australians, colonialists and nation builders, looked westwards and then north – to the United Kingdom – for direction.
- Where they didn't look was directly north, where there were the developed and sophisticated nations of China, Japan, India, Vietnam, to acknowledge just a few.
- The insularity of Australia, the propensity to look west rather than engage north, is now gone.
- We are engaged with Asia. We work with Asia and our economy is interwoven with the economies of the Asian nations.
- For this economic partnership to grow and deliver mutual benefit and prosperity, this nation needs infrastructure.
- We can supply the energy – the coal and the natural gas – Asia needs. We can supply the iron ore and other base minerals.
- But we're more than just a quarry.
- We have products for Asian markets – from food to machinery and IT. We have one of the strongest and most resilient banking and financial sectors in the world and we have a wealth of talented people.
- But, to get what we have – the products, services and expertise – to the markets that want what we have, we need infrastructure.
- We need the transport networks, the ports, the financial and communications networks, the cities and their people.

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- Our original system of government – a federation of individual States – has been an inhibitor of the provision of infrastructure.
- You can add to that internal European rivalry.
- Rail, the transport mode that is regaining its lost pre-eminence to road, was a victim of the rivalry.
- The colony of New South Wales had an English railway engineer who laid the first tracks in this nation on standard gauge. He was English, what else would he do.
- The colony of Victoria, our hosts for this conference, engaged an Irish rail engineer, inured in Irish broad gauge. Again, given his antecedents, what else would he do.
- And, for decade after decade, that's how it was. I won't get into what occurred in the other colonies – that only makes it worse.
- So our first piece of major infrastructure sowed the seeds for a century of transport and productivity restrictions and cost.
- Travel between Melbourne and Sydney and you had to change trains – usually in the middle of the night. Goods also had to be trans-shipped. Increased costs, lower productivity and major personal inconvenience.
- It took until 1962, six decades after the colonies became the nation of Australia, and over 150 years since European settlement, for this particular legacy of Anglo-Irish rivalry to be rectified.
- Indeed, as part of the Australian Government's commitment to infrastructure, we're still working on connecting and rebuilding the national rail network, including gauge issues.
- That's where my organisation comes in.
- We were established by the Australian Government to plan and guide this nation's infrastructure – the urban transport systems, rail tracks linking regions and resources, road systems for the future, the ports shipping Australia's products to the world and

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the water, energy and communications systems this nation needs.

- Across the national government we're showing that we can get things done.
- There is an acknowledgement that we can compete with the best, we can deliver on projects this nation needs, and we can build on the personal and economic partnerships between Australia and the nations to our north.
- The Asian nations have, in recent decades, been almost synonymous with a "can-do" attitude.
- So too is Australia.
- In financial parlance – we are a player in the most dynamic and growing region in the world.
- Infrastructure will not only keep Australia in the game – it will enhance our place.
- The National Broadband Network will link every corner of this nation to a communications network that, perhaps, epitomises a change of approach for Australia.
- Like transport, communications is a vital part of everyday life, commercial and personal.
- The NBN will keep us in instantaneous contact with economies and people around the region, the world, as well as in the next Australian street.
- It is infrastructure vital for our future economy.
- So too is effective and sustainable transport – where expertise abounds in this room.
- It may have taken us well over a century to have a rail system that was operable across State borders.

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- Now, we have to have transport networks, sustainable and effective networks, across not only State borders but interoperable nationally and internationally.
- Rail, road, ports all come into the interoperability.
- The networks have to be financed. They have to be priced right. They have to have access and regulation conducive to business and consumers. They have to be interstate and intrastate and plugged in to international markets.
- And, like the initial non-connectivity of our inter-colonial rail lines – and they were individual, unconnected, lines before they became networks – we need to streamline governance to achieve the outcomes the Australian people expect.
- The three tiers of Australian government – national, State and Territory and local – have to engage and work together for the nation.
- National interests, a focus on outcomes for the Australian people must supersede parochial issues, rivalries and one-upmanship.
- This is the approach Infrastructure Australia takes in providing advice to all governments and in developing major policy initiatives.
- We also identify regulatory reforms necessary to enable efficient and coordinated delivery of national infrastructure investment.
- Streamlining governance means addressing issues like planning. Nine sets of government and 565 local governments for 22 million people may work for democracy and community participation - may long it thrive.

But it doesn't work for infrastructure.

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- Take Australian cities – and planning.
- Australia is a highly urbanised society – once of the most urbanised in the world.
- Australian cities – those of more than 100,000 people – contribute nearly 80 per cent of national Gross Domestic Product and employ around 75 per cent of the nation's workforce.
- But within those cities, State and Territory administrations lay down strategic planning frameworks and local government implements planning policies – although at times States take over planning decisions.
- When it comes to major infrastructure within those cities – and beyond those cities – local, state and territory governments increasingly look to the Australian Government for the capital to build the infrastructure.
- In meeting those demands, the Australian Government must ensure that taxpayers funds – and that's what builds infrastructure – must be allocated to deliver improved living standards and a better quality of life for all Australians rather than merely satisfying particular local demands.
- This is the beginning of a new regime in governance in Australia. If projects are to be delivered then the national good and improved outcomes for people must be the drivers.
- The Australian Government is also engaging directly with local government in the delivery of projects and by-passing the State and Territories.
- Such steps, such vital steps for the development of this nation, are not taken without some resistance. That's to be expected.
- But the steps are being taken, and will continue to be taken, and the outcomes we seek reflect the views of the most important group of stakeholders – the Australian people.

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- When we seek better, more effective, sustainable and fairer priced urban transport options, we look to people like you for answers and options.
- But along with you, the experts, we also look to the people who access urban transport every day.
- We listen to the people who live in the cities. The people who sit in trains, buses and ferries. The people who sit in motor vehicles, idling in congestion. And the people who walk and ride the bicycles.
- The people may not be intimately involved in development and design, but they are the ones that eventually pay for government projects ... and use those projects.
- As both end users and project financiers, they have expectations, aspirations and demands.
- They deserve to be listened to.
- You wouldn't be surprised to know that problems with public transport and road infrastructure are the most common areas of dissatisfaction among people who live in Australia's urban areas.
- Public transport is seen as overcrowded, unreliable, too infrequent, too slow and unsafe at night.
- Roads, well that's simpler – they are chocked and congested and residential streets are becoming clogged with parked cars.
- There are limited or incomplete cycle paths.
- Walkers suffer from distances, dangerous intersections, too many vehicles, too much noise and that sense of being crowded out. As well, the point was made that it's easier to get your shopping home in a car than push a trolley down a street.
- People are also perceptive.
- They know where the problems lie – they may not have the solutions but they look to government to find the solutions.

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- Through the work that's been done by Infrastructure Australia, and other initiatives like Nation Building, we are building and rebuilding this nation's infrastructure so that there is growth and prosperity for the Australian nation and its people and to provide a solid foundation for our place in the region and the world.
- We've got massive public transport rail projects in Melbourne, Adelaide and on the Gold Coast.
- We've got port revitalisation.
- There are road, water and energy projects.
- And, as I've said, we've looking to the National Broadband Network for our communications future.
- These projects also have productivity benefits.
- Australia is becoming more productive – we have to so that we can compete with the region and internationally.
- Infrastructure underlies productivity gains but helping what we do best, perform even better and more competitively.
- There is more to do – there is always more.
- Nation Building, Infrastructure Australia projects and the other economic and infrastructure initiatives have kept this nation moving ahead while other, comparative, nations have marked time or slipped backwards.
- To achieve what the Australian people want us to achieve, what they've told us directly they expect, will need more funds and more projects.
- The funds needed are big and so too are the projects they will create.
- In many respects, we've only just begun.
- We've identified the infrastructure deficiencies.

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- We've appraised and recommended projects across the nation – projects being rolled out now or ready to begin.
- We've developing strategies for the future of this nation's ports, its freight and its cities – so this nation is prepared to engage with our regional neighbours and the world.
- We're working on redefining governance through cooperation and reform – statutory and economic.
- We're looking to people like yourselves – with the experience and the expertise to reinforce our projects and our knowledge.
- And, we're listening to the people.
- We've shown we can take the decisions and get things going.
- Through this combination of:
  - forces and factors,
  - of people and experiences,
  - of a desire to grow and share prosperity,
  - of acknowledging problems and resolving them, and,
  - building for the future with governance that works for the future.
- Through this combination we're showing the potential of this nation.
- And that potential is unlimited
- Thank you.