

South Rail Corridor Study, commissioned by DOTARS, made the comment:

If key intermodal facilities are not operating efficiently, this would actually negate gains made by improving infrastructure along the corridor.

Cross-border and near-border infrastructure commitments—or the lack of them—are of great concern to the committee. The Commonwealth has focused on new cross-border modalities for water, and transport infrastructure must be treated in a similar fashion.

Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat staff. Secretaries Ian Dundas and, more recently, Janet Holmes played leadership roles, while Tas Luttrell and his team carried out a remarkable two-year commitment. Researchers Courtney Krauss and Samantha Mannette deserve our praise. I have much pleasure in tabling this report.

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham) (1.35 pm)—I commend to the House the report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services entitled *The great freight task: is Australia's transport network up to the challenge?* The report presented today is the result of 2½ years of work by the committee. I would like to put on the record my sincere appreciation of the chair and my fellow committee members for their professional and sincere approach to this inquiry and the writing of the report, an approach which has led to its bipartisan support.

The report is also significantly the result of the tremendous dedication and efforts of the committee secretariat, and I particularly acknowledge the work of the principal research officer, Tas Luttrell, and the senior research officer, Samantha Mannette. I would also like to thank and note the contribution of the previous committee secretary, Ian Dundas, the administration officer, Marlene Dundas, as well as Janet Holmes and Jazmine De Roza.

The report includes recommendations across a wide range of aspects aimed at meeting the challenge of the doubling of the freight task by 2020 and the need to expand the role of rail in that task. I am particularly pleased that the report recommends that a critical port infrastructure fund be established to urgently provide funding for the construction of vital projects of up to \$150 million.

One such vital project that may take advantage of the recommended fund is the missing transport link in Wollongong, known as the Maldon-Dombarton rail link. The link has been on the infrastructure agenda for many years; in fact, it is nearly half-completed. For 20 years, the link has sat there mothballed. Since I was first elected in 2004, I have been determined to put the project back on the agenda. Some in Wollongong thought I was mad to propose it. But I am happy to report that the pessimistic view has altered significantly in the last 12 months. The committee's visit to Wollongong, as part of this inquiry, was a contributing factor to that changed view.

The biggest development to encourage the completion of Wollongong's missing freight link is, of course, the New South Wales government's \$140 million investment in the expansion of the port of Port Kembla. Wollongong needs to expand this regional asset and, while existing road and rail infrastructure is able to cope with the planned expanded use of the port, this will not be the case for future expansions. The additional benefit of completing the Maldon-Dombarton link is the connection to south-west Sydney, a growing manufacturing and export market. My colleague the honourable member for Werriwa has spoken about this and I am pleased that he acknowledges the strategic link and supports the completion of the project. The completion of the Maldon-Dombarton project would provide an essen-

tial link from south-west Sydney to the port of Port Kembla. No longer would freight need to face a curfew and the additional cost penalty involved in using the existing line.

I am very pleased that the views of major industry have changed in Wollongong with regard to the Maldon-Dombarton link. The coal industry and Port Kembla Coal Terminal made significant submissions to the inquiry. However, the case for completing the link no longer relies exclusively on coal. The expansion of the port of Port Kembla changes the business case. That has been my argument. The New South Wales government, to its credit, has invested substantially in the expansion of Wollongong's port asset, but the Commonwealth has not to date. AusLink 1 left the Illawarra out in the cold. It is time the Commonwealth made a contribution to the economic diversity of Wollongong. I believe this report provides a sound business basis upon which to do that.

I recognise the long advocacy and support of the Maldon-Dombarton project by Associate Professor Philip Laird, of the University of Wollongong. Professor Laird is well known to the committee and a passionate advocate of the importance of rail in the freight task for a very long time. This 35 kilometres of half-completed track needs to be completed. It will fit well with the committee's recommendations. I urge the Commonwealth to adopt the committee's recommendations and, in particular, recommendations 5, 6 and 7. Finally, I thank all the participants across the country—including people from Wollongong—who provided written and verbal submissions with such great enthusiasm to the committee. I believe we have returned their confidence and trust with this comprehensive and significant report. I commend the report to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)**—The time allotted for statements

on this report has expired. Does the member for Hinkler wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

**Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler)** (1.40 pm)—I move:

That the House take note of the report.

**The SPEAKER**—In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

#### MAIN COMMITTEE

##### Transport and Regional Services Committee

##### Reference

**Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler)** (1.40 pm)—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Main Committee for debate.

Question agreed to.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Reserve Forces Day

**Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide)** (1.41 pm)—Yesterday I had the great pleasure of attending Reserve Forces Day, which was held in my electorate at the Keswick Barracks. Reserve Forces Day aims both to raise the profile of Navy, Army and Air Force Reserves and to recognise the enormous contribution of past and present reservists. The South Australian event was a great success and was greatly enjoyed by all present, and it included an address by His Excellency the Governor-General. I congratulate the organisers of this event, particularly the chairman of the South Australian Reserve Forces Day Council, Barrie Newman, and add my personal recognition of the enormous efforts made by our reservists.

As I have previously mentioned in this parliament, a proposal is before the federal government to close a number of South Aus-