



ROAD CHAOS HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR RAIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Trains North Inc

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New England Highway is suffering massive pavement damage, due to unsustainable heavy vehicle traffic diverting to the New England Highway as the nominated alternate route for the flooded Pacific Highway.

Trains North In Vice President Margaret O'Connor said today "It's chaos on the New England Highway today as the huge surge in trucks and vehicles diverted from the flooded coastal M1 rip up already water damaged pavement on the New England Highway. The road between Armidale and Guyra is in tatters, with motorists who depend on it for daily local transport in dismay about the dangerous road conditions. Ordinary commuters are putting their lives at risk trying to dodge giant pot holes and stripped out bitumen sections" said Mrs O'Connor.

"We have an estimate of 7000 vehicle movements passing the Black Mountain service station between Armidale and Guyra last night on the New England Highway. This load and volume is just unsustainable on wet pavements".

"Obviously our hearts go out to those devastated by extreme floods on the Mid North Coast, said Mrs O'Connor "but we are counting the cost of flooding too, in the massive damage being done to our critical road pavements by the large number of trucks and cars being forced to divert from the flooded coast road to the New England Highway.

Mrs O'Connor said "Trains North has been calling for the New South Wales Government to review the 2006 DOTARS Study that has been used to discount requests for reinstating freight and passenger services to the Main North Rail Line north of Armidale and over the border into Queensland. Mrs O'Connor said that "the study rejected the Main North Line as a route for the

Port to Port Inland Rail, but not for normal intra and interstate freight. DOTARS 2006 needs urgent review.

Our plea is that the NSW and Federal governments get together and review DOTARS with a view to putting the Main North Rail line back on the table for inclusion in a fit for the future logistics network for Australia's eastern seaboard.

Mrs O'Connor said "We need to get ordinary freight off roads and back onto rail, which is cheaper and more fuel efficient than road transport. Our precious road pavement needs to be reserved for lighter passenger traffic and time critical freight, like urgent medical transport, with rail doing more of the heavy lifting on less time pressured services. There is simply inadequate redundancy built into our transport system as this Mid North Coast disaster, and others before it has clearly demonstrated.

Mrs O'Connor said the coastal rail line is unlikely to be back in service until sometime next week, and the M1 is still out of action". She said ' the New England Highway, on its own, simply cannot bear the burden being placed on it by these natural disasters. We need better transport planning for a sustainable future and rail must be put back on the table".

Trains North Media Contacts:

Margaret O'Connor (Vice President) 0427677991

Caroline Chapman (Secretary) 0408607073

trainsnorthinc@gmail.com