

Public Transport Policy

ACTU Congress September 1991

1.1 Congress expresses deep concern over the lack of a balanced land transport debate within Australia and the role played by the Industry Commission in attempting to shape the rail component of land transport policy.

1.2 Congress supports the planned and negotiated approach to change in the railways as embodied in the recommendations of the tripartite Rail Industry Council. We call on Federal and State Governments to put into effect their "in principle" endorsement of the Rail Industry Council recommendations which was given at the September 1990 meeting of ATAC, and to reject the Industry Commission's prescriptions for railways.

1.3 The report of the Industry Commission on rail transport, as with much of the work of the Industry Commission is ideologically motivated and is largely irrelevant to the needs of developing a modern rail network, as well as failing to provide a sustainable direction for urban and rural rail transport. Its major prescriptions are from the economic rationalists manual of massive job losses (on top of the 35,000 railway jobs lost in the last decade), privatisation, cutbacks in services and steep increases in urban rail fares.

1.4 In relation to the National Rail Corporation, Congress reaffirms ACTU Executive policy adopted on 22/8/91, and in addition calls on Federal and State Governments to :

- give immediate priority to developing and implementing a national strategy for the upgrading and specialisation of railway workshops and to give support for the maintenance requirements of the NRC to be undertaken by rail workshops
- give consideration to the main western line in NSW being retained as a core feature of national rail infrastructure

1.5 In line with ACTU policy on privatisation and the March 1989 decision of the ACTU Executive in relation to public rail services, Congress rejects any proposals to privatise national rail freight terminals, workshops or per-way maintenance. Congress accepts that Federal and State Governments should investigate sources of public and private investment in railway infrastructure and assets provided that the operation, ownership and control remains with railway systems.

1.6 In relation to urban public transport, Congress notes the projections of the Rail Industry Council which indicate that an expansion of rail, light-rail and bus feeder services in our mainland capital cities would yield \$2.8 billion in annual net economic savings to the Australian community.

1.7 Congress therefore calls for an integrated program of urban public transport expansion to be made a major policy priority by Federal and State Governments for our capital and provincial cities.

1.8 While noting the suspension of work on the Very Fast Train proposal between Sydney and Melbourne, Congress expresses support for high speed rail development in Australia as part of an integrated national land transport plan.