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Submission No. LC 138  
Received  
Road Safety Committee

BY:.....



2 October 2007

Mr John Eren, MP  
Chair  
Parliament of Victorian Road Safety Committee  
Parliament House,  
Spring Street,  
East Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear;

RE: Improving Safety at Level Crossings

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission with respect to improving safety at level crossings.

To state the obvious the increasing degree of harm and destruction caused through heavy vehicle / train collisions at level crossings has exponentially increased with the increasing length and weight of heavy vehicles. So much so that it is now common place that when a collision occurs at a level crossing, the likelihood of death or serious injury coupled with potential multiple million dollar losses is a near certainty.

SCT Logistics through its affiliation with the Australasian Rail Association (ARA), in particularly through the Safety Managers Group, has for the past 12 months been developing a strategy on this subject, and will be making a submission to your committee.

SCT Logistics recommends that your committee seek access to the initiatives being pursued through this ARA project.

In addition to this information SCT Logistics draws your attention to the following:

- Historically there has been no concerted national level crossing strategy.
- Historically there has been no formalised process between rail infrastructure owners/managers and government (either Commonwealth, State or Territory) with respect to the designation of heavy vehicles routes and their intersection with rail crossings.
- Historically there has been no formalised process for consultation between road authorities, local government or rail infrastructure owners / managers with respect to level crossings safety interaction.
- Historically there is no common stakeholder accepted risk management tool to identify, assess and control hazards associated with level crossings.

- Historically the level of policing of level crossings has been marginal at best.
- Historically governments approach to improving level crossing safety has been a reactive mortality approach relating to specific incidents.

SCT Logistics as a national rail / road operator realises the basis view point of both road and rail users being:

- Rail have defined and dedicated routes to follow and operate in a highly regulated environment with stringent safety operating requirements.
- Road have stringent road safety rules to follow, which should be applied to rail in adverse circumstances.

SCT Logistics sees the solution to this vexed issue as being a combination of the following:

- Elimination of road / rail crossings.
- Where road / rail crossings can't be eliminated, then current crossings should be substituted by control measures such as over passes.
- Where elimination or substitution of road / rail crossings can't be achieved, then road routes should be isolated from rail routes.

Since the recent Kerang accident, a lot of technological solutions have been floated to deal with this problem.

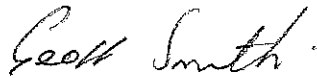
One such solution was a wireless signal devise that disabled heavy vehicles within 300 metres of a rail line. Our evaluation of this solution may on face value address the 90% level crossing circumstances related to the Kerang accident but what about the problems such a devise poses to heavy vehicles drivers when they are driving parallel to the rail lines.

Unfortunately it does not currently appear that technology will provide benefit to all users.

Accordingly, SCT Logistics does not see any magical bullet solution for this problem and encourages the committee to give serious consideration to:

- Devising methods to improve the awareness of road / rail users.
- Installing level crossing warning devices along roadway i.e. Amber flashing lights prior to the main warning devices
- Give serious consideration to requiring road / rail users to participate in workshops to enhance their understanding of each others user requirements.
- Recommends road authorities / local governments enter into meaningful risk management discussions with respect to existing level crossings, B Double etc routes and further routes.
- Recommends government dramatically increase the level of spending to eliminate level crossings.
- Recommends government dramatically increase the level of policing of level crossings.

As a company with a significant exposure and having been on the receiving end of several level crossing accidents throughout Australia, SCT Logistics is convinced that any solution package must be underpinned by a highly visual, coordinated and ongoing education program.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geoff Smith".

Geoff Smith  
Chief Executive Officer  
SCT Logistics