

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## ARTC MUST IMMEDIATELY REVIEW LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) must immediately review the safety of every level crossing on its network following the release of a highly critical report by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

The ATSB report examines the collision that occurred between *The Ghan* and a sewage truck at a level crossing near Two Wells, South Australia, on 6 August 2007. The driver of the truck was seriously injured. The crossing did not have lights or boom gates.

The Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, Trevor Martyn, said the report was an indictment of the ARTC's approach to maintaining the level crossings on its interstate rail network.

"The report makes it clear that truck drivers were gambling with their lives whenever they used the Two Wells level crossing," Mr Martyn said.

"Under the Australian Standard, truck drivers should have been able to look north for 600 metres up the railway line to see oncoming trains. But the vegetation growing next to the track meant that truck drivers could only see for 60 metres. In other words, they could not see an oncoming train until it was too late to do anything about it.

"The ARTC knew that the vegetation was a hazard but did nothing for five long months. On 5 March 2007, the need to restore an effective line of sight was entered into the ARTC's infrastructure management system. It was assigned a priority rating of P2, which means the work should have been done within 28 days.

"The ARTC later downgraded the maintenance priority to P4, which gave it 180 days to take action. The ATSB investigators were unable to find any evidence of why the ARTC decided to downgrade the priority of the work, but a truck driver was seriously injured as a result of the decision," he said.

The investigation report concluded that:

*Had the vegetation been removed within 28 days of the time that the original sighting fault had been identified on 5 March 2007, it is very likely that the driver of the sewage truck would have seen *The Ghan* approaching the crossing on 6 August 2007 with sufficient time to stop and thus avoid the collision.*

Mr Martyn said the ARTC must now review the safety of all the level crossings on its network as a matter of urgency and fix the crossings assessed as unsafe.

"Every day, truck drivers gamble with death or serious injury when they go over level crossings with badly placed stop signs and inadequate sighting distances. The usual reaction from the rail industry is to blame truck drivers for accidents, but this report shows the rail industry must take responsibility for the safety of its level crossings, even if that involves a reduction in train speeds where necessary," he said.

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*National Voice of the Australian Trucking Industry*