

9 May 2017

## Bold Plans Bring Rail into Focus

The Federal Government's \$20 billion investment in rail announced in the 2017-2018 Budget brings rail strongly into focus and is supported by the Australasian Railway Association (ARA).

"The Government's renewed commitment to rail, including through its \$10 billion National Rail Program for urban and regional passenger rail, underscores its importance to Australia and is welcomed by the rail industry," said Danny Broad, Chief Executive Officer of the ARA.

"ARA congratulates the Government's strong funding commitment to rail in the 2017-2018 budget to boost economic activity and improve the liveability of our cities.

"In particular, we applaud the Government's strong commitment to Inland Rail through its \$8.4 billion equity injection to the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

"The Government's \$8.4 billion commitment to Inland Rail is critical to supporting the delivery of this iconic national freight project.

"Inland rail is fundamental to boosting rail freight efficiency in Australia, and given Australia's freight task will grow 26% by 2026, its delivery is important to all Australians.

"The \$8.4 billion announced by the Government today provides renewed confidence to all parts of the rail industry this project will be delivered.

"Linking Victoria and regional NSW with Queensland will help get freight off the road and onto rail, address rising congestion in Sydney, and will deliver thousands of jobs; many in regional Australia.

"This project will deliver a strong economic contribution to the nation and will enhance productivity and increase consumer freight options.

"We note the Government's intention for a public private partnership to progress the Toowoomba to Kagaru tunnel section, which is the most challenging aspect of this project.

"Whilst this capital injection to the ARTC is welcomed, the fact remains that significant work needs to occur to ensure the Inland Rail project comes to fruition.

"This includes maximising the economic benefits of this project by delivering efficient linkages that directly connect the railway line to the Port of Melbourne and Port Brisbane," Mr Broad said.

Mr Broad also welcomed the Federal Government's \$20 million 'Faster Rail' commitment to support the development of business cases to achieve faster rail connections between the major cities and regional centres.

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“The value of incremental improvements must not be underestimated – infrastructure upgrades that optimise efficiency will vastly improve the service offering and rail’s ability to compete with road.

“Industry is keen to partner with the Commonwealth to undertake further work on how Australia can benefit from building and operating faster rail, particularly in our high growth areas near our capital cities.

“ARA will continue to work with the Commonwealth to highlight the economic and social benefits of further investments in major new urban rail projects (both heavy and light rail) to reduce congestion in our major cities,” Mr Broad said.

On the critical issue of skills in the rail industry, Mr Broad welcomed the Government’s steps to address the nation’s skills needs through the Commonwealth-State Skilling Australians Fund.

“Developing the rail industry’s skills base is an important issue for the future sustainability of our industry.

“To prosper into the future, the rail industry requires a well skilled and trained workforce and the Skilling Australians Fund is critical in building these capabilities,” Mr Broad concluded.

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