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Federal Budget must deliver on rail

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) calls on the Commonwealth Government to make firm commitments to rail in the 2017 Federal Budget.

“The ARA outlined in its pre-budget submission that a significant financial commitment is needed in order to boost rail efficiency and urban liveability,” said Mr Danny Broad, Chief Executive Officer, Australasian Railway Association.

“The ARA has indicated that a firm commitment by the Commonwealth to vital infrastructure, such as Inland Rail and rail to ports is necessary. Inland Rail will increase Australia’s GDP by \$16 billion. It is profitable from day one, for every \$1 the Commonwealth invests there is a return of \$2.60 to our economy. Inland Rail will inject 16,000 jobs at its peak, retaining 700 jobs every year over the life of the project. Inland Rail will reduce congestion on our roads with fewer heavy vehicle movements and improve our nation’s environmental sustainability.

“An ongoing commitment to increasing urban and regional rail projects is also necessary. The ARA looks to the Commonwealth Government to work with State and Territory Governments as partners in investing into rail. Ongoing financial support needs to be provided to enhance our liveability in our cities and growth corridors.

“The ARA is calling on the Commonwealth Government to support the Australian rail manufacturing industry. We have highlighted to the Commonwealth in our pre-budget submission that a funding program should be developed to support local rollingstock manufacturers and their suppliers. While we understand Australia is part of a global market, maintaining a manufacturing base can be incentivised through local content policies and development standards for our nation.

“We urge the Commonwealth Government to also take action on road pricing. The Commonwealth needs to act on mass-distance-location charging mechanisms for heavy vehicles along major interstate routes which compete with rail. The playing field on this issue has been unequal for far too long. Options for independent price regulation of heavy vehicle charges need to be commenced, including trial elements of heavy vehicle road reform.

“The Commonwealth Government needs to demonstrate its commitment to positioning public transport as a viable alternative to cars by recognising public transport tickets of all modes as a fringe benefit, providing employers and employees with an incentive to travel by public transport.

“If the Commonwealth Government is serious about listening to the voice of the rail industry, then we will see our priorities delivered with actions in the 2017 Federal Budget,” concluded Mr Broad.

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