

MEDIA RELEASE

ARA Welcomes Fast Rail Focus in Federal Budget

ARA welcomes the spending on infrastructure in the 2019-20 Budget, most notably, the committed funding for fast rail projects.

\$2 billion has been allocated to deliver Melbourne Geelong fast rail, \$14.5 million for the establishment of a National Fast Rail Agency to provide advice to the Government on fast rail initiatives and business cases, and \$40 million to progress business cases for five new corridors. These are additional to three already underway: Sydney to Newcastle, Melbourne to Shepparton, and Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast.

ARA CEO Danny Broad said “The government’s commitment to planning fast rail projects is welcomed in that it provide a platform for future investment in congestion-relieving fast rail,” he said.

“And we acknowledge the increases in rail spending over the last three years, including for the Inland Rail project. However, investment in urban passenger rail projects in this budget could have been enhanced, particularly in light of the significant spending on roads nationally in the budget.

“Given that a peak hour Sydney train can replace 800 cars and a freight train can replace 110 trucks, I would have liked to have seen more rail to deal with urban congestion.”

“We note the initiatives to improve skills acquisition, including the allocation of \$525 million to improve the quality of vocational education and training. This includes the establishment of a National Skills Commission to drive reform, and additional payments to support up to 80,000 apprentices over 5 years in skills shortage areas.

ARA has been warning about skills shortages impacting the rail sector. “We look forward to engaging on the details of this initiative,” he concluded.

Rail spending highlights

- \$2 billion from 2021-22 for fast rail between Melbourne and Geelong,
- \$14.5 million over the forward estimates for the establishment of a National Fast Rail Agency to provide advice to the Government on fast rail, and lead the development of business cases,
- \$40 million over the forward estimates for strategic business cases to identify and prioritise upgrades for five new corridors: Sydney to Wollongong, Sydney to Parkes (via Bathurst and Orange), Melbourne to Albury Wodonga, Melbourne to Traralgon, and Brisbane to the Gold Coast,
- \$3.5 billion for the first stage of Western Sydney North South rail link,



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- \$700 million (stages 2/3) for the South Geelong to Warun Ponds Rail Upgrade,
- \$44 million from for strategic business cases to identify and prioritise upgrades to improve the standard of regional rail networks that connect economic centres with the Australian Rail Track Corporation's network

ENDS - 3 April 2019

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