Australasian Railway Association

MEDIA RELEASE

ARA welcomes TRACK program to promote mode shift to rail

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The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed the launch of the Transport Resilience and Capacity Kickstart (TRACK) Program today, which is an important step towards moving more freight on rail and reducing fuel use and emissions across Australia's transport network.

The $52 million program is designed to improve the productivity, resilience and reliability of Australia's freight network.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the program recognised the immediate opportunity to make better use of rail as part of Australia's freight system.

"The recent fuel crisis confirmed that we must move more freight on rail to increase the fuel efficiency and environmental performance of the national network," Ms Wilkie said.

"Moving more freight by rail is one of the practical measures Australia can take now to reduce transport emissions while improving the efficiency and resilience of our national supply chains.

"The TRACK Program provides a welcome mechanism to recognise those wider benefits and help address some of the commercial barriers that can prevent freight customers from making the shift to rail."

Under the draft program guidelines, $52 million will be available for incentive payments, with the first round providing up to $26 million to support additional containerised and contestable bulk freight moving by rail.

Round one will provide incentives for additional freight moved on rail, with diesel savings, productivity improvements, mode shift and rail resilience central to the assessment process.

The Federal Government released the final guidelines for the program today, with applications for funding now open.

Ms Wilkie said the program was an important first step, but sustained policy support was needed to deliver long-term mode shift.

"Freight customers make decisions based on the full supply chain, including cost, reliability, service and transit time," Ms Wilkie said.

"Incentives need to be supported by measures that keep rail competitive and improve the productivity and reliability of the network.

"Australia needs an ongoing, coordinated approach that supports mode shift, addresses barriers to rail competitiveness and invests in the network capacity and technology needed to carry more freight efficiently.

"With Australia's freight task continuing to grow, getting the policy settings right now will deliver lasting benefits for productivity, emissions reduction and the resilience of our national supply chains."

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