Australasian Railway Association

MEDIA RELEASE

# ARA welcomes Victorian Rail Freight Plan, calls for clear mode shift target

**17 September 2026**

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed the release of the Victorian Rail Freight Plan 2026–2036 and its focus on improving long-term planning, coordination and transparency across the state's rail freight network.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the plan provided an important framework to support greater use of rail as Victoria's freight task continues to grow.

"Victoria's freight task is forecast to double to more than 900 million tonnes a year by 2050, and that growth cannot be accommodated by trucks alone," Ms Wilkie said.

"We welcome the Victorian Government's recognition that a reliable, predictable and efficient rail freight network will be critical to meeting future demand, while supporting productivity, road safety and emissions reductions."

The ARA welcomed the commitment to develop a 10-year plan for maintenance and upgrades to the regional rail network, supported by a longer-term funding strategy. The plan also commits to regular public reporting of key performance indicators through an online dashboard.

Ms Wilkie said greater certainty about future network investment would give freight operators and customers the confidence needed to make long-term commercial decisions.

"Rail freight requires significant private investment in rollingstock, terminals and supply chains and a long-term focus on maintenance and upgrades will increase industry confidence as it plans for the future," Ms Wilkie said.

"We are also pleased to see a commitment to increase coordination across the wider network to ensure strengthened freight considerations on issues impacting network access."

The delivery of the plan will also see new processes established to improve the availability of freight paths and develop a long-term rail freight network vision with industry.

This would consider opportunities including upgrades to major lines, passing loops, holding tracks, standardisation and the potential reopening of lines.

The plan also establishes rail mode share as a key performance indicator, including the share of freight transported by rail to the ports of Melbourne, Geelong and Portland.

Ms Wilkie said the next step should be to establish a clear and measurable mode shift target.

"The ARA has called for the Victorian Government to set a goal of 30 per cent of contestable freight volumes being moved by rail across the state," Ms Wilkie said.

"The plan recognises the need to increase rail's share of Victoria's freight task. Setting a clear target would provide the ambition against which these reforms and investments can be measured."

Greater use of rail delivers significant environmental, safety and community benefits, with rail freight generating 16 times less carbon pollution compared to road and supporting improved road safety outcomes.

“Moving more freight on rail will reduce pressure on Victoria’s roads, improve safety, strengthen supply chains and support the state’s emissions reduction objectives.”

Ms Wilkie said the ARA looked forward to continuing to work with the Victorian Government and industry as the new plan is delivered.

**ENDS**

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