

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Wednesday 26 May 2021**

### **Almost 400 people converge on Albury-Wodonga for Inland Rail Conference**

The Inland Rail Conference kicks off today, bringing together the industry leaders and decision makers shaping this transformational project as it continues to forge ahead.

Almost 400 people will take part in the event hosted by the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) and Australian Logistics Council (ALC).

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the conference came at an exciting time for the project, with trains already running on the first section from Parkes to Narromine and construction of the Narrabri to North Star section currently underway.

"Inland Rail will be crucial to meeting our growing national freight task and will strengthen domestic supply chains across the east coast of Australia," Ms Wilkie said.

"Rail will facilitate almost three quarters of the growth in demand for freight to 2030 and Inland Rail will be an essential part of this effort.

"It is great to see the industry coming together this week to discuss the project's progress and the opportunity it presents for the future of the industry and the nation."

ALC Chief Executive Officer, Kirk Coningham OAM, welcomed the opportunity to discuss the progress of the project.

"Inland rail is an amazing project of sweeping scope and economic growth, providing huge opportunity for regional Australia to connect to global supply chains," Mr Coningham said.

"ALC and its members fully support Inland Rail and other projects that move freight onto rail and ease pressure on road freight.

"Adjacent investments into connecting areas of supply chain including ports will contribute to ensuring Australia's supply chains continue to remain robust and resilient."

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Michael McCormack said the Inland Rail conference provided the opportunity for key stakeholders to come together to discuss the benefits and connect on the opportunities created by Inland Rail.

"Our commitment to Inland Rail is about delivering the infrastructure Australia needs to serve future generations – supporting business growth and unlocking productivity in our national freight supply chain," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

“Inland Rail is already sparking investments along the rail corridor. In Albury - Wodonga we see complementary infrastructure taking shape with the Nexus Industrial Precinct and the Logic Centre, strategically placed to drive freight efficiencies from the road and rail connection.

“Additional growth is expected with the potential for freight hubs, timber and paper manufacturing, food processing and Defence manufacturing, which could see a boost of up to \$4.6 billion to Victoria’s Gross Regional Product over the first 50 years of operation of Inland Rail.

“In Southern New South Wales there are opportunities in farming and forestry manufacturing, food and fibre processing, regional transport capacity and warehousing that could further boost Gross Regional Product by up to \$3.8 billion from Inland Rail operations through to 2080.”

Australian Rail Track Corporation Managing Director and Chief Executive Mark Campbell said the Albury-Wodonga was the perfect location for a summit of regional rail opportunities.

“ARTC’s vision, once Inland Rail is complete, is a fully integrated network that provides real options to customers, no matter where they are.

“Inland Rail will be a catalyst for change in regional Australia and ARTC is working hard with industry and communities every step of the way to ensure that we can maximise the benefits to each area during construction and build for the future operation of this service.

“The Albury/Wodonga freight hubs represent a model that has integrated rail, warehousing and superior road access for higher mass limit vehicles and there is further potential for inter-regional links between Albury/Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Parkes, Narrabri and Toowoomba for a short-line operator to shuttle non-urgent goods.

“We need Inland Rail to sustain affordable freight, reliable supply chains and a productive and prosperous Australia”, he said.

ARTC’s Inland Rail Chief Executive Richard Wankmuller said that the Inland Rail project will be a catalyst for growth and further investment in regional Australia.

“Inland Rail is the enabling infrastructure that Australia needs. The next step will be the vision of local people and companies to start unlocking its potential as it comes online.

“Nationally, Inland Rail will support more than 21,500 jobs at the peak of construction with many of these working directly on the construction effort in the heart of regional Australia or in businesses and services that grow in response to Inland Rail stimulus,”, he said.

The Inland Rail Conference takes place from 25-27 May and will focus on the theme Connecting Regions and Building Australia.



It comes at a critical time for the project, with more than \$2 billion in awarded contracts and a further \$8 billion in procurement.

Delegates will take part in site tours within the region on Tuesday, before two days of plenary sessions to discuss project updates, case studies and future priorities for the project.

ENDS

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