

27 March 2020

Rail freight critical to helping keep Australia's economy on track

Australia's largest rail freight operators and infrastructure managers have thanked federal and state governments for moving quickly during the coronavirus pandemic to protect ongoing critical freight services across state borders.

Freight on Rail Group (FORG) of Australia Chair Dean Dalla Valle said without goods trains, domestic and imported products like food, clothing, household items, medical and pharmaceutical supplies, cleaning products, fuel, chemicals, electronics, steel, and machinery and parts, cannot be efficiently transported to depots and warehouses between cities and regional towns.

"A single-stacked 1,800-metre interstate goods train can haul 260 shipping containers, thereby helping to free-up hundreds of truck drivers each week to focus on delivering goods and products the remaining 'last mile' from warehouses to stores where consumers need shelves restocked.

"To put this in perspective, a single shipping container can hold approximately 25,000 toilet paper rolls, 55,000 food cans or 1,500 cases of beer.

"Without freight trains, bulk exports like grain, meat, fresh and dry produce, cotton and coal cannot be efficiently hauled to ports, the gateways to global markets.

"Paddock to port, pit to port, or manufacturing plant to port – essential rail freight services stretch across state borders, servicing finely-tuned supply chains across our continent," said Mr Dalla Valle.

Mr Dalla Valle said an extensive logistical and economic ecosystem surrounds the continued running of rail freight services – freight trains need to be fuelled, maintained and cleaned, while regular safety checks carried out by qualified staff are imperative.

"In recent weeks, rail freight operators have implemented strict hygiene protocols at depots, terminals and maintenance facilities, including social distancing, to protect the health of essential workers.

"Rail freight has the added benefit of operating within secure railway corridors and facilities prohibited to members of the general public," said Mr Dalla Valle.

ENDS

Media contact: Melinda Hawkins 0429 687 712

About Freight on Rail Group (FORG) of Australia

FORG consists of the nine major rail freight businesses in Australia: Pacific National, Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), One Rail Australia, Aurizon, Qube Holdings, SCT Logistics, Arc Infrastructure, WatCo Australia, and Southern Shorthaul Railroad (SSR).

These rail freight companies contribute more than \$11 billion each year to the nation's economy, employ 20,000 people (many based in regional Australia), operate in every Australian state and territory (except Tasmania), utilise 1,600 locomotives and 34,000 wagons, and manage and operate 23,000 kilometres of rail track.