

MEDIA STATEMENT 22 September 2021

Inland Rail will be backbone infrastructure for the nation's supply chains

The group representing Australia's rail freight operators and infrastructure owners today reinforced the need to increase momentum with delivery of the Inland Rail Project.

Freight On Rail Group (FORG) have reaffirmed support for Inland Rail saying it will be backbone freight and supply chain infrastructure for Australia that enables future economic development and jobs while also delivering environmental and safety benefits.

FORG members have welcomed the Federal Government's announcement this week that agreements have been reached to progress detailed designs and civil works construction planning on key sections of Inland Rail. The detailed design and planning works are for the 306 kilometre greenfield section between Narromine and Narrabri, and approximately 100 kilometres of civil works between Narrabri, North Star and Whetstone.

Collectively, FORG members contribute more than \$11 billion to Australia's economy each year, employ almost 20,000 people, operate 1,600 freight locomotives and manage 23,000 kilometres of rail track. They include Pacific National, Australian Rail Track Corporation, One Rail Australia, Aurizon, Qube Holdings, SCT Logistics, Arc Infrastructure, Watco Australia and Southern Shorthaul Railroad.

"It's critical that we get on with the job of delivering Inland Rail," said FORG Australia chair and Aurizon Managing Director & CEO, Andrew Harding.

"Now more than ever Australia understands the importance of having reliable, safe and secure transport infrastructure for the nation. COVID-19 has demonstrated that point very clearly.

"With Inland Rail, we are investing in nation-building infrastructure that will both drive economic activity as well as dramatically lift productivity for rail freight operations along Australia's most heavily-trafficked transport corridors.

"Lifting rail freight productivity will provide greater value and choice for freight customers and contribute to achieving a shift in freight from road to rail along the Inland Rail route, and on freight corridors that will link to Inland Rail."

FORG members also recognise the compelling safety and environmental benefits that will be delivered with Inland Rail.

Moving bulk freight by rail is safer, more efficient and cleaner than road – a typical freight train hauling cargo containers removes up to 60 B-double trucks off the road, while rail freight produces up to 16 times less carbon pollution per tonne kilometre than road.

"As Australia strives to decarbonise freight supply chains, rail has the potential to deliver low-carbon solutions for intermodal freight customers, agricultural producers, manufacturers and the resource sector," Mr Harding said. "Inland Rail will provide step-change improvement in the domestic and export supply chains for industries that are vital for Australian's economic prosperity.

"We support the Federal Government continuing to work with the states to prioritise the delivery of the Inland Rail project, recognising there are challenges to be worked through at a local level.

"Importantly, there is also a need to consider policy changes that's will enable the economic, environmental and community benefits of the investments being made in Inland Rail to be realised in the future.

“If investment and policy changes are introduced together, the potential long-term benefit to the regions and to the nation collectively will be very substantial.”

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