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M E D I A R E L E A S E

## HIGH SPEED RAIL WELCOMED, BUT INFRASTRUCTURE BOTTLENECKS NEED ACTION NOW

The Australian Logistics Council (ALC) has welcomed the release of stage one of the implementation study to construct a high speed rail link from Brisbane to Melbourne, but has urged Government not to lose sight of the infrastructure bottlenecks around Sydney which are seriously restricting economic activity.

“ALC backs the development of a fast rail link, which would take people off existing lines and enable freight to move more efficiently,” said ALC Chief Executive, Michael Kilgariff.

“But our support for the project is tempered by the fact that serious bottlenecks are occurring right now on the east coast which is hampering the ability of the freight transport and logistics industry to meet rising levels of demand.

“These bottlenecks occur most notably between Newcastle and Sydney, where passenger transport takes precedence over freight.

“The government needs to ensure it gives attention now to infrastructure upgrades in and around this critical transport link by providing appropriate levels of funding to improve the efficiency of this bottlenecked region.”

Mr Kilgariff said that with the freight task expected to double by 2030 and almost triple by 2050, further infrastructure capacity will be required in the future to cope with growing demand on the already stretched road and rail network.

“With the study estimating the east coast population will rise from 18 million today to 28 million in 2056, it’s clear a ‘status quo’ approach to infrastructure on the eastern seaboard is simply not an option,” he said.

“The release today of the first stage of the implementation study is a step in the right direction to ensure Australia has the infrastructure it needs to meet growing freight and passenger demand.”

Mr Kilgariff said phase 2 of the project, which is expected to further examine route alignment, the financial feasibility of high speed rail, and potential financing options, would put the meat on the bones of the high speed rail proposal.

“The next steps in this process will prove critical and will dictate if and when we see this project come to fruition,” Mr Kilgariff said.

“ALC strongly believes nationally significant infrastructure should be judged on the importance of the infrastructure to the national economy.

“In that regard, we look forward to a comprehensive cost benefit analysis assessed against economic criteria to thoroughly assess whether this preferred option represents value for money.

“And with a price tag estimated between \$60 billion to \$100 billion, we will take an active interest in the study’s preferred funding options, as any project of this magnitude would require significant private sector involvement so it doesn’t act as a drain on the public purse.

“ALC also looks forward to engaging with the Government and its study authors to ensure future planning works for the high speed rail, particularly as they relate to route selection and protection, take into account the specific infrastructure needs of freight.”

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