



## Improved Freight Efficiency Must Feature in National Conversation on Rail

The release of a report today into a possible high speed rail link along the eastern seaboard should also draw into focus the growing need to improve freight efficiency in Australia.

“The report provides important financial and geographical information needed to progress the necessary planning works that go into a project of this cost and magnitude,” said Michael Kilgariff, ALC Managing Director.

“However, the release of this report today should also serve as a reminder that action is also required by all levels of government to improve rail freight efficiency, for example, between Brisbane and Melbourne,” he said.

According to figures from the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, the total interstate freight task on the north south corridor increased on average by around 5 percent a year between 1972 and 2007 (BITRE: Interstate Freight in Australia, 2010).

However, over the same period, rail’s modal share declined from 35 percent in 1972 to 12 percent in 2007.

“With a national freight task predicted to double by the year 2030, and triple by 2050, more freight needs to be moved by rail, particularly between our eastern states,” he said.

“The figures highlight the need to ensure Australia has the right infrastructure in place, particularly in our major cities, to meet growing levels of demand.

“This involves not only dedicated freight-only rail lines, but also appropriately located intermodal terminals.

“These figures also underscore the need for appropriate long term planning to boost rail freight capacity, including the potential construction of an inland freight route.

“ALC acknowledges the significant financial support by the Federal Government to assess the potential economic benefits of an inland freight route, including the publication of the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail Alignment Study in 2010.

“The study identified potential future demand for an inland freight line and a potential route that would improve freight efficiency by cutting the time it takes to transport freight between the two cities.

“It is clear that there will be significant technical challenges associated with an inland rail route that require further consideration, such as the tunnel through the Toowoomba Ranges.

“However, ongoing consideration needs to be given to determining what steps need to be taken to preserve and protect the alignment and to ensure that land is available if there is an economic business case to proceed with an inland freight route.

“ALC looks forward to the high speed rail report sparking a national conversation about Australia’s infrastructure needs over the decades to come, but reminds all levels of government this must also include a discussion about the efficiency of the Australian freight task,” he said.

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