

MEDIA RELEASE

2019 INLAND RAIL CONFERENCE - STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS

Over 460 delegates participated in the 2019 Inland Rail Conference in Toowoomba on 21-22 August 2019, presented by the Australian Logistics Council (ALC) and Australasian Railway Association (ARA).

Participants explored multiple facets of this nationally-significant freight infrastructure project and set out the actions needed to ensure local communities, consumers, producers, freight operators and the Australian economy derive the full benefits of Inland Rail, both during the construction phase and once it is operational.

The Inland Rail project, a 1,700km railway line directly linking Brisbane to Melbourne will transform Australia's freight networks, enhancing supply chain efficiency and safety, boosting the nation's export competitiveness and unlocking regional development and employment opportunities for local communities.

With backing from Gold Sponsor, the ARTC Inland Rail Project, and supported by the Toowoomba Regional Council, the event heard from leading political figures, independent economic analysts and project executives, including:

- **The Hon. Mark Coulton MP**, Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, Assistant Trade and Investment Minister;
- **The Hon. Catherine King MP**, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development;
- **Adrian Hart**, Associate Director, Construction and Maintenance, BIS Oxford Economics;
- **John Fullerton**, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC);
- **Richard Wankmuller**, Chief Executive Officer, Inland Rail Project, Australian Rail Track Corporation; and
- **Cr Paul Antonio**, Mayor, Toowoomba Regional Council

ARA and ALC were also proud to announce **the 2020 Inland Rail Conference will be held in Albury Wodonga**, with the two-day conference to incorporate visits to Albury's Nexus Industrial Precinct and Wodonga's Logic Centre.

Through the presentations and a series of interactive discussion with expert panellists, this year's conference identified a number of key themes and priority actions that governments and industry must now work collaboratively to pursue:

- **Interconnectivity is everything.** While Inland Rail will play a critical role as a 'spine' in our freight network, it will ultimately rely on connections to other key freight infrastructure, including intermodal hubs and ports.
- **Collaboration between governments is essential.** Governments at all levels right along the alignment need to be working together. This will ensure landholders and communities will be supported during planning and to share in the benefits of Inland Rail as soon as possible. Delegates urged the Queensland government and the Commonwealth to sign the Intergovernmental Agreement that will allow construction work in Queensland to begin.
- **Port connectivity is critical.** Separation of passenger and freight rail in our cities is critical for our supply chain efficiency. The release of the joint study undertaken by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments into freight rail links between the Acacia Ridge and the Port of Brisbane should be expedited.

- **Getting the Balance Right.** To maximise the benefits of Inland Rail, complementary investment and regulatory reform is required across four key critical areas; road pricing; data capture and sharing; achieving the right modal balance across modes and getting terminals right.
- **Meeting Customers' Demands.** Customers' targets for the Inland Rail Project include reliability of service, improved connectivity, sustainability of freight services, express capability under 24 hours and seamless last mile arrangements.
- **Community engagement is crucial.** By proactively working with local communities, sourcing local materials and using local contractors to support delivery of the project, Inland Rail will deliver an economic boost to regional communities, during and beyond its construction phase. Genuine, open and honest consultation with land owners must continue to occur to ensure affected landowners have opportunities to provide input on the route alignment.
- **Inland Rail will diversify regional workforces.** Through initiatives such as the Inland Rail Skills Academy, the construction of Inland Rail will provide regional workforces with the skills needed to maintain and oversee the operation of Australia's modern rail freight network into the future.
- **Advantages of Inland Rail for urban communities should be highlighted.** The project will help improve the environmental performance of the freight sector by lowering emissions, will make it easier to get fresh produce to urban markets and will help to address road and rail congestion for urban residents. It is important to recognise that the benefits of Inland Rail extend beyond regional communities.
- **Data capture allows for more effective investment decisions.** Industry participants across all modes of freight transport should actively support initiatives like the National Freight Data Hub, so that supply chain performance can be monitored and measured.
- **Inland Rail aligns with actions outlined in the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy.** As states along the alignment publish implementation plans for the Strategy, they must set out how new freight infrastructure will connect with Inland Rail, and indicate deadlines for the completion of such infrastructure.
- **New freight precincts must incorporate viable rail links.** The National Planning Principles, which the Commonwealth has agreed to develop as part of the Strategy, should require new intermodals and freight precincts to demonstrate how they will link with relevant rail infrastructure, including Inland Rail.

Danny Broad, CEO of the Australasian Railway Association said, *"The large number of mayors and councillors who attended the Inland Rail Conference provided delegates with a timely reminder that Inland rail will offer positive legacies broader than just an infrastructure project, including opportunities for regional growth and revitalisation for communities, businesses, partnerships, jobs, and prosperity."*

Upon signing a MOU with ARTC to develop the Inland Rail Skills Academy he also said *"ARA welcomes ARTC's commitment to create education, training, skills development and employment opportunities to support the Inland Rail project and we look forward to working to ensure the Academy is developing real training opportunities for local skilled labour in rail construction, operations and maintenance."*

Kirk Coningham, CEO, Australian Logistics Council said, *"Once again, this industry-led conference has shown there is genuine excitement about the transformation Inland Rail will bring to our freight networks. As these two days showed, this enthusiasm is not limited to rail operators. It is shared by local communities, exporters and all forward-looking industry participants who understand the changing nature of the freight task."*

"Now is the time to leverage that enthusiasm by ensuring that all levels of government are working collaboratively with industry to make certain Inland Rail is a piece of freight infrastructure that delivers the efficiencies needed to meet changing consumer expectations and helps our exporters get their goods to market," he said.

Richard Wankmuller, CEO, ARTC Inland Rail said, *"This conference has seen a seismic conversation shift from 'will it happen?', to councils, businesses and farmers all thinking and asking about how they can collaborate to make the most of what we are creating. All parties now realise that Inland Rail is a reality and it will create a new economic direction for many of the communities along the alignment. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity and it's time to get on board."*

Attendees were deeply saddened during the conference to learn of the passing of former Deputy Prime Minister and passionate rail transport advocate, the Hon. Tim Fischer AC. Delegates paid tribute to his decades of service to the nation with a standing ovation.

ALC and the ARA thank all attendees, presenters, sponsors, exhibitors and the people of Toowoomba for helping to make the 2019 Inland Rail Conference such a success.

ENDS

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