

## Save Our Tracks

Today the Rail Freight Alliance (RFA) announced that it has created a Fighting Fund “Save our Tracks” to ensure the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP) is fixed and completed and the Victorian Rail Freight Network remains in Victoria’s hands.

The campaign has been sparked on the back of Minister Allan’s announcement that the Murray Basin Rail Project is out of funds and rumours that the future ownership of the Victorian Rail Freight Network is in doubt.

The MBRP is a 5-stage project that was to be completed at the end of 2018. Funded by the part sale of Rural Finance Corporation and the Federal Government with a commitment to deliver a standardised network across a significant part of Victoria.

Currently, Stage 2 of the project is not complete, much of works are substandard and see many sections with trains unable to travel above 40 kph.

This MBRP was heralded as a game changer, getting more trucks off roads, creating jobs, providing a major boost to the transport industry, the agriculture sector and communities across Victoria, allowing competitive access to Victorian Ports, reducing supply chain costs and growing Victoria’s global economy.

“RFA Chair, Cr Glenn Milne said, “The current situation is completely unacceptable, the project has been completely mismanaged, the works that have been completed will need to be repaired, we are not even halfway through Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP) and Minister Allan has announced that project is out of money. I am appalled, how can this possibly be the case?”

“The State Government sells two State assets the Rural Finance Corporation and long term lease to Port of Melbourne which were funded on the back of rural and regional communities, agriculture was the financial back bone to these entities, yet rural and regional Victoria are left with the slops, when is this Government going to give rural and regional Victoria its fair share.” Cr Milne said

“The Andrews Government has focused on road safety, the environment, livability and the economy, I question if they know how to achieve these aspirations for all Victorians, Cr Milne said” How is it equitable that we can get a Melbourne families home sooner and safer as part of the level crossing removal program, but in Country Victoria government allow more and bigger trucks on our regional road network, putting Victorians at risk, damaging roads, and slowing traffic. It would be safer to get more freight on Rail.”

This is a vital investment in the prosperity of all Victorians and Melbourne’s future livability.

It has been suggested that as part of funding negotiations to complete the MBRP the Victorian Government standard gauge lines would be leased to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

The Alliance believes that rail lines in Victoria should remain in the State's control as part of its entire freight network.

The ARTC has been successful in managing the national network, however, have shown little interest in managing lines within state boundaries.

The suggestion that part of the State network would be handed over to the Federal Government is completely rejected by the Alliance and should be by Minister Allan. These lines are owned by all Victorians, to hand these lines over to the Federal Government is a cop out and disaster for rail freight.

“The future of rail freight in this state sits with the Victorian Government, we know from experience what occurs when the Victorian Government sell off control of the state lines as we are still dealing with the ramifications from the Kennett years, the Rail Freight Alliance asks Minister Allen to not sell out Victorians, said Cr Milne.”

**ENDS**

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