



Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Railway

The proposed Melbourne to Brisbane inland railway is one of the largest and most important potential rail freight projects currently being considered in Australia.

A significant growth in containers through the Port of Melbourne is expected, from the present level of 2 million TEU per year to around 7 million in 2035. This will create monumental congestion in Melbourne unless rail's mode share greatly improves from its current level of less than 10% of containers through the port and less than 10% in the under performing Melbourne- Sydney- Brisbane corridor.

This contrasts poorly with other interstate corridors as well as best practice in Europe and North America. Key reasons for this poor performance are rail congestion in the Sydney Basin as well as the curvy alignment of the current railway built in the 1880s. The current Melbourne to Brisbane rail route is 250 km longer than the road route and rail journey times now average 9 hours longer than truck times. The new route would overcome these disadvantages and deliver distance, time and cost savings.

Minister for Infrastructure Mr Anthony Albanese commissioned the Australian Rail Track Corporation to study this issue in 2008 and the consultants reported in *The Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Alignment Study* in July 2010. They recommended a 1731 km route from Melbourne to Brisbane via Albury, Junee, Parkes, Moree and Toowoomba. This route would serve many highly productive agricultural regions including the Lachlan Valley and the Toowoomba area. While improved reliability and speed and lower costs in handling through freight (estimated at 12 million tonnes per annum, 65% northbound, in 2040) provides the key economic justification for the investment, intermodal opportunities will occur at regional centres along the line. The consultants estimate that the cost of handling freight on this railway when completed will be 48% of the cost of road transport, with rail market share of 80% by 2060.

Total project cost is estimated to be \$3.688 billion and a positive cost benefit ratio of 1.19 if operations commence in 2040.

The Australian Railway Association and many other councils and bodies support the proposal. You can find this report on the internet at www.artrc.com.au/library/IRAS_Final%20Report.pdf.