

## Submission to Infrastructure Australia

### **The Rail Freight Alliance**

The Rail Freight Alliance is made up of rural, regional and metropolitan Councils across Victoria. The Alliance membership has a strong belief that more freight on rail will add to the efficiency, productivity and prosperity of the nation.

Our Membership includes the Councils of Ararat City, Buloke, Central Goldfields, Ballarat City, City of Melbourne, City of Wodonga, East Gippsland, Latrobe City, Loddon, Gannawarra, Glenelg, Greater City of Bendigo, Greater Shepparton, Hindmarsh, Horsham Rural City, Maribyrnong City, Mildura Rural City, Moyne, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, South Gippsland, Southern Grampians, Strathbogie, Swan Hill Rural City, Warrnambool City, West Wimmera, Wyndham City and Yarriambiack.

### **Rail Freight Investment for Victoria**

Victoria's population is expected to grow by approximately 3.5 million people over the next 30 years. This growth presents a great challenge to provide a liveable, affordable, productive state and economy.

The Rail Freight Alliance believes that to maintain the Liveability of Victoria, while continuing to increase imports and exports, a far greater share of the freight task will need to transfer from road to rail in the next 20 years.

Rail provides cost effective freight transport over longer distances, is a safe means of transport, reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and prolongs the State and Local Government road networks.

### **Victoria's Freight Task**

The Victorian Freight task cannot be serviced by Road Freight alone.

Victoria's freight task will more than double to 900 million tonnes over the next 30 years.

The Rail Freight Alliance believes that rail is essential in the current and future Victorian supply chain, ensuring access to global markets through Victorian Ports.

### **Train Speeds**

The speed trains can travel along rail is critically important for the productivity of Rail Freight in Victoria.

Currently all State-owned rail lines in Victoria are regulated by VLine, with some sections of line gazetted as low as 15 kilometres per hour.

The Alliance considers that freight lines in Victoria should be regulated and maintained to a standard that allows for rail speeds of at least 100 kilometres per hour to maintain competitiveness with Road Transport.

### **Standardisation of the Victorian Network**

Standardisation of rail lines allows greater flexibility of Australia's network and creates competition among service providers.

The Alliance recommends the following sections of track for Standardisation: -

- Maryborough to Ballarat
- Ballarat to Geelong
- Korong Vale to Dunolly
- Sea Lake to Korong Vale
- Manangatang to Korong Vale
- Ballarat to Ararat Line
- Tocumwal to Mangalore
- Deniliquin to Echuca Line
- Echuca to Toolamba Line
- Shepparton to Dookie Line

### **Maryborough Ballarat**

Currently this section of line services freight and a passenger service between Maryborough and Ballarat.

The Victorian Government had announced that they were intending to dual gauge this line as part of the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP). The Government is now reassessing the MBRP.

The Alliance considers that this line should be standardised whilst maintaining a dedicated passenger service between Maryborough and Ballarat.

### **Ballarat to Geelong, Korong Vale to Dunolly, Sea Lake to Korong Vale and Manangatang to Korong Vale Lines**

These lines are part of the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP).

The Victorian Government has announced that they do not have sufficient funds to complete this project.

The Victorian Government has committed to completing the second stage of the five-stage project.

It is essential that this project is completed to standard, as rail freight capacity has been reduced from the region as consequence of the first 2 stages of the project.

### **Tocumwal to Mangalore, Deniliquin to Echuca, Echuca to Toolamba, and Shepparton to Dookie Lines**

Two rail gauges in the region results in reduced competition and inefficient rail freight access to ports.

Standardisation and TAL upgrade of the Tocumwal – Seymour, Deniliquin – Echuca – Toolamba and Shepparton – Dookie lines will increase rail freight, reduce transport costs, increase flexibility, reliability and efficiency and will greater enhance productivity.

The Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Project is a critical project for Australia - this region must have access to this network.

### **Ballarat to Ararat**

Standardisation of the Ballarat to Ararat Line would allow access to Western Victoria, not only for passenger services to access Melbourne via Ballarat but allow rail freight access to the ARTC rail network.

### **Tonne Axle Loadings (TAL) and Rail Productivity**

Higher axle loads are an important factor in improving freight train productivity.

There has been an increased investment in the High Productivity Freight Vehicle network and subsequent investment in road transport.

Rail Freight has not had the same investment in new technologies.

The Rail Freight Alliance recommends investing in the following lines: -

### **Recommended TAL**

- Maryborough to Ballarat 21 TAL
- Ballarat to Geelong 21 TAL
- Ballarat to Ararat Line 23 TAL
- Korong Vale to Dunolly 21 TAL
- Sea Lake to Korong Vale 21 TAL
- Manangatang to Korong Vale 21 TAL
- Tocumwal to Mangalore 23 TAL
- Deniliquin to Echuca Line 23 TAL
- Echuca to Toolamba Line 23 TAL
- Shepparton to Dookie Line 23 TAL
- Maroona to Portland 23 TAL
- Rainbow to Dimboola 21 TAL
- Hopetoun to Murtoa 21 TAL

### **Maroona to Portland Line**

The Maroona to Portland Line is part of the ARTC Network and is critical to Australia's economy.

This 172 kilometre stretch of standard gauge line links the Western half of Victoria to the National Grid and the Port of Portland, considered the best deep-sea Port in Regional Victoria.

Maroona to Portland Line is currently 19 TAL - the Alliance recommends increasing tonne axle loading to 23 TAL in line with the adjoining ARTC Network.

### **Rainbow to Dimboola and Hopetoun to Murtoa Lines**

Currently the Rainbow and Hopetoun lines are 19 TAL. Upgrading these lines to 21 TAL would increase freight productivity and enhance the investments made in grain accumulation in these regions.

### **Additional Lines**

The Gippsland Region is continuing to grow in population and its freight task continues to increase.

As Victoria's population and freight task continues to grow, this region must have capacity to access the City and Port of Melbourne.

The Alliance considers that the corridor between Caulfield and Pakenham being serviced by 4 rail lines, essential for the Gippsland Region and Melbourne's Eastern Suburbs.

These lines are: -

- Caulfield to Dandenong
- Dandenong to Pakenham

### **Caulfield to Pakenham Corridor**

In early 2019 a new 2-line corridor was completed between Caulfield and Dandenong.

The Victorian Government is planning further upgrading and grade separation projects between Dandenong and Pakenham.

Four lines are needed between Caulfield to Pakenham to service the freight and passenger needs.

A dedicated corridor for freight and regional passenger trains is needed as the Caulfield to Pakenham line is used intensively by suburban trains.

### **Re-commission**

There are strategic investments that can be made in Victorian Rail that will enhance the network; one such investment is the 28 kilometre Shepparton to Dookie Line, which was suspended in 2007. This line could service in excess of 100,000 tonnes of grain currently being transported by road.