

Harvest off the Tracks

With the grain harvest just starting in Victoria. Victorians can expect to see bigger and more trucks on the road network, this will directly impact on the cost to move product to export.

The Murray Basin Rail Project heralded as a game changer, increasing prosperity to the regions and removing 20,000 truck movements from the road network and increasing Victoria's global competitive advantage is now a complete shamble.

The project scope said it would:

- Upgrade the lines in the Murray Basin from broad gauge to standard gauge
- Restore and upgrade the existing standard gauge line between Ararat and Maryborough
- Upgrade the lines in the Murray Basin from 19 tonne per axle to 21 tonnes per axle
- Upgrade the broad gauge line from Geelong to Ballarat to dual gauge
- Upgrade the Ouyen to Murrayville line from broad gauge to standard gauge with axle loadings of 19 tonnes per axle.

The failings in this project are nothing short of catastrophic. The capacity of the lines has been reduced as the increased tonnage on the line promised by the government has not been achieved and line speeds are significantly slower.

The travel time from Mildura to Melbourne now increasing to 17 hours, the project that promised so much has fallen far short.

- Manangatang to Geelong and on to Melbourne is 11 hours 45 minutes
- Sea Lake to Geelong and on to Melbourne is 11 hours
- Merbein (Near Mildura) to Geelong; 16 hours 15 minutes; and
- Merbein to Appleton Dock (Port of Melbourne); 17 Hours and 25 minutes

What does this mean for the coming harvest from the west of Victoria?

- Not all the Sunraysia harvest will make it to export, fruit will be left on the ground, as the capacity to freight the product is now significantly reduced.
- Grain growers will pay an additional \$5/ton as capacity has reduced from the rail system.
- An increase in truck movements, to compensate for the current state of the project.

ENDS

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