

Victorian Government's continued failure will see thousands of extra trucks on Victoria's Roads

The Rail Freight Alliance (RFA) is exceptionally disappointed following Minister Allan's limp announcement today "Getting on with the Murray Basin Rail Project" (MBRP)

In February 2015, the Andrews Government committed to the Murray Basin Rail Project. Heralded as a "game changer" for regional Victoria, driving economic growth, creating jobs, providing a major boost to the transport industry, agricultural sector, and regional communities. The project was marked as supporting freight mode shift from road to rail, removing around 20,000 truck trips from our roads to ports and improving safety for Victorian communities.

Through mismanagement of the Victorian State Government, currently the MBRP project is uncomplete and at a standstill. The project has decreased freight capacity from this region. It is widely discussed that more of the freight task is being delivered by road and that freight costs from the region have increased because of the current state of the MBRP.

Now three years after the MBRP was due to be completed by the Andrew's Government, Minister Allan announces \$48 Million toward repairing the damage they have already done to this project, contingent on the Federal Government contributing \$195.2 Million.

In early 2020 the Victorian Auditor-General's Office released their report on the MBRP and was scathing of the Victoria Government's management of the project.

What it appears Minister Allan has announced today is repairs to the shoddy and substandard work that has hampered this project from the inception. Rerailing the section of line between Maryborough and Ararat that was done as part of the project in 2017 with some sections of century old rail and putting back some staging areas that were removed as part of the MBRP only a few years ago.

Basically, what we are seeing is money being spent on project failings and basic maintenance.

We do not give the Federal Government a free pass either. If the Federal Government were genuinely committed, they could allocate funding to the MBRP contingent on the State Government completing the Murray Basin Rail Project to its original scope.

The Rail Freight Alliance has been fighting to get the Murray Basin Rail Project back on track and ensure the project is completed to the Victorian Government's original scope.

RFA says we agree with Minister Allan's comment that "this project is too important to play politics with". So, it is about time Minister Allan did just that - stop playing politics and get on and complete the project you promised the people of regional Victoria to the original scope you committed to.

ENDS

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