

Inland Rail gets government green light

** August 28, 2013 **

Supply chain groups welcome both Labor and Coalition commitments to the long-awaited Inland Rail.

Earlier today, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Warren Truss committed \$300 million to the project, promising completion by 2026.

This follows Labor's announcement earlier this week to prioritise the necessary planning studies, environmental assessments and land acquisitions over the next 12 months.

With Australia's national freight task predicted to triple by 2050, supply chain groups have been campaigning for an inland route, claiming it is a vital economic link missing from freight networks.

Mr Truss said the project would ensure the transport network was prepared to meet Australia's growing freight movement over the next 50 years.

"Under our plans, the standard gauge rail line that presently runs from Melbourne to Illabo (near Cootamundra) will finish its 1800 kilometre journey at the Port of Brisbane," Truss says.

Freight and passenger train lines would be separated near Ipswich.

"This project will take seven hours off transit times from Melbourne to Brisbane, remove trucks from the Pacific, Newell and Hume Highways, and boost regional development along the entire 1,700 kilometre route," Australasian Railway Association (ARA) CEO Bryan Nye says.

Nye believes the sooner the project is completed, the sooner the benefits to the economy can be realised.

"The Inland Rail has the potential to unblock an infrastructure bottleneck that currently sees Brisbane to Melbourne freight unnecessarily travelling through Sydney, congesting road and rail networks alike."

The Australian Logistics Council (ALC), vocal supporters of an inland rail line, agrees.

"It would free up rail capacity in our major cities, particularly in Sydney, which often acts as a bottleneck as passenger trains are afforded priority," ALC Managing Director Michael Kilgariff says.

Rail freight mode share on the north south corridor has declined dramatically over the last 35 years, dropping from 35 percent in 1972 to only 12 percent in 2007.

Kilgariff believes an inland freight line would help reverse this trend.

One thing is certain. With both major political parties now on board, the project is one step closer to reality no matter who wins the next election.