

Victorian Murray Basin Freight Rail rescue package

Imogen Hartmann,
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The Victorian Murray Basin Freight Rail network is set to receive a \$200.2 million rescue package from the Federal Government after a revised business case was completed.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, Michael McCormack, said the extra funding, which includes \$5 million for planning the standardisation of the network, is in addition to the \$240.2 million the Federal Government has already committed to the project.

"The Federal Government's \$195.2 million rescue package is funding the most extensive package of works recommended by the revised business case and the Victorian Government, which includes remedying key issues caused by works to date," Mr McCormack said.

The Victorian Government requested the package following its completion of a revised business case.

"It's crucial that a reliable rail network is available to efficiently move this grain, mineral sands, fruit and vegetables and wine, and to encourage more of that freight off the road network and on to the rail network," Mr McCormack said.

"In April 2016, the Australian Government committed to the Murray Basin Freight Rail Project, which was to standardise the rail network and deliver significant efficiencies for industry and allow more freight to be carried by rail.

"A key part of the rescue package is \$5 million for planning to deliver a fully standardised network of the Murray Basin Freight Rail Network.



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"I will be asking the Victorian Government to match the Federal Government's \$5 million planning funding and come up with a robust plan for full standardisation.

"It is clear to both governments that there needs to be greater accountability for this project going forward, to ensure these works are delivered in a timely and efficient manner."

Member for Wannon, Dan Tehan, welcomed the Federal Government's additional investment, which will see the re-railing of the line between Ararat and Maryborough.

"These works will create economic activity, help businesses with orders for materials and other supplies, support more than 1,000 direct and indirect jobs throughout the life of the works activity, and increase demand in local businesses such as food and retail when work crews are onsite," Mr Tehan said.

Federal Member for Mallee, Anne Webster, said over the past 18 months, she had participated in and hosted numerous stakeholder forums on the issues regarding the Murray Basin Freight Rail Network.

"I've heard the same message in all of these meetings – the project so far has failed to deliver and work towards full standardisation must continue," Dr Webster said.

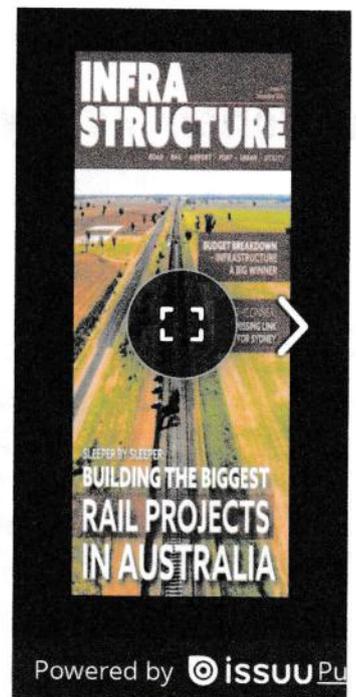
"The Victorian Government must come to the table, match our planning commitment and deliver the work quickly so we can realise the benefits of this critical infrastructure project.

"With industry and stakeholders, I am still frustrated by the Victorian Government's refusal to release the full business case. Releasing just the executive summary is treating industry with contempt.

"The Victorian Government decision to lay 100-year-old steel between Ararat and Maryborough as part of its 'upgrade' of the Murray Basin Freight Rail Network was short-sighted.

"This steel will need to be ripped up and replaced with material that is actually up to the job.

"In the meantime, the Australian Government is listening to stakeholders and is investing in works to improve the reliability and efficiency of lines for Yelta, Mildura, Murrayville, Ouyen, Dunolly, Maryborough and Ararat."



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