

Media Release



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Where to now for derailed Murray Basin Rail Project?

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is extremely disappointed with the Victorian Government's revised business case for the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP) and is calling for the entire business case to be released to enable farmers and industry to fully understand the future of the project.

VFF Grains Group President Ashley Fraser said whilst action and some commitment to the MBRP is welcome, the VFF could not support the project until it sees every detail and a future vision for the promised regional freight rail network.

"Until we see the full revised business case for the Murray Basin Rail Project and have an understanding of the plan to deliver the project as promised, we cannot support this."

"A fit-for-purpose rail freight network must provide an opportunity for competition amongst train providers, storage facilities, access to all ports and access to the national rail network."

"A commitment was made to build the Murray Basin Rail Project five years ago, including the standardisation of the Sea Lake and Manangatang lines."

"Under this revised plan these lines will not be converted to standard gauge resulting in farmers and businesses along the broad gauge Sea Lake and Manangatang lines effectively being cut off from the standard gauge Inland Rail network."

"Ultimately this means double handling of freight which results in added costs for farmers, especially in the important grain growing regions in Victoria's north west."

"The original vision was for a modern, efficient regional rail freight network. While the execution to achieve this vision may have been flawed, the intention was right."

"It's incredibly frustrating that metro projects seem to be topped up as costs blow out, but this vital country project is being ignored." Mr Fraser said.

VFF President David Jochinke said the original scope of the project promised increased volume and efficiency of rail freight.

"The promised standardised of the network would have enabled faster trains capable of carrying more freight."

"It's frustrating that we'll be left with parts of the network with reduced capacity and productivity."

"An important intention of the project was to move as much product as possible by rail."

"By not standardising the Sea Lake and Manangatang lines, we're forcing more trucks onto our already crumbling roads," Mr Jochinke said.

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The VFF is calling on the Federal and State Governments to work together to find a solution to deliver the MBRP in full.

ENDS

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