

Media Release



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

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Auditor General finds Murray Basin Rail Project over time and over budget

Today's Auditor General's assessment of the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP) has revealed that it is three years behind schedule and 87 per cent of allocated funds have been exhausted, without a completion date in sight.

VFF President David Jochinke said he is concerned the project has been on hold since mid-2018.

"The MBRP is a once in a generation project to create a fit-for-purpose regional rail network in Victoria and the current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed just how vital transport links are to our food supply," Mr Jochinke said.

"This is a nation-building project. At a time when our economy is in crisis, it is projects like this that are essential to our future prosperity."

"The Victorian Government should be thinking about the projects that it will bring on line to support our economy through bushfires and now COVID-19. We will come out of Novelcorona and when we do, it's projects like this that we need to have ready to go."

Mr Jochinke said the Murray Basin Rail Project will reduce transport logistics costs for our industries and primary producers and ensure our rail network can meet the future freight demands of our state.

"The Government estimated the MBRP would lift efficiency by 15 per cent and allow for an additional 500,000 tonnes of grain to be transported by rail each year," Mr Jochinke said.

"Not only does this project have significance for rural communities with an estimated 280 construction jobs but it is also important for Melburnians who will benefit from fewer trucks on the road, especially to Geelong."

"We want it finished. It will get freight off road, reduce road damage and improve road safety as well as getting agricultural exports to port quicker and cheaper."

"Melbourne is getting tens of billions of dollars in transport infrastructure upgrades. Regional Victoria just wants its fair share. This project is a no brainer," Mr Jochinke said.

Premier Daniel Andrews committed to the project on Monday August 17, 2015 promising to "*...fix the missing links in our freight network and connect regional Victoria to the ports of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne.*"

On February 24 this year at the VFF Grains Conference membership unanimously resolved to demand the Government adhere to its commitment to standardise the remaining broad gauge lines and complete the link through Ballarat to Geelong.

ENDS

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