

BUSINESSES LEFT IN DARK ON INLAND RAIL INDECISION

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SENATOR THE HON BRIDGET MCKENZIE

SHADOW MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE
SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

THE HON MARK COULTON MP

THE NATIONALS FEDERAL MEMBER FOR PARKES

THE NATIONALS CHIEF WHIP

MEDIA RELEASE

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Businesses left in dark on Inland Rail indecision

The Albanese Government must restore more than \$200 million in road funding to support delivery of the Inland Rail following release of Dr Kerry Schott's independent report which backed the importance of the Inland Rail project.

Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, Senator Bridget McKenzie said Labor must restore western New South Wales road funding it cut from the October budget which was intended to support transport connections and road safety along the Inland Rail route.

Senator McKenzie reinforced the importance of the funding after meeting the Gilgandra Shire and Narromine Shire Councils and inspecting completed sections of Inland Rail track in western New South Wales with the Nationals Federal Member for Parkes, Mark Coulton MP.

"Dr Schott's report strongly supports the delivery of the Inland Rail and has provided the Albanese Government with a blueprint on how to proceed with the project.

The Prime Minister must now see the importance of this critically needed road safety funding to support the nation-building Inland Rail project and reinstate the \$218 million in cut and delayed funding," Senator McKenzie said.

Construction of the Inland Rail steamed ahead in regional New South Wales where the former Coalition Government cooperated with the Commonwealth to make this project happen.

"Two stages of the Inland Rail have been completed, ensuring last summer's harvest was able to reach ports despite widespread flooding.

"This compares with stalled progress in both Queensland and Victoria where the Labor state governments stymied progress on this critically important project which is expected to take 200,000 trucks off our roads and remove 750,000 tonnes of CO2 per year," Senator McKenzie said.

"Completing the Inland Rail is essential to lowering the emissions of the transport sector."

"This new infrastructure is impressive to see firsthand in person and is already making a positive impact.

Federal Labor's October budget cuts to road funding projects supporting delivery of the Inland Rail include \$206.8 million cuts this term for grade separations to make road and rail connections safer, as well as \$14.6 million from road upgrades to connections to the Newell, Oxley and Castlereagh highways at Gilgandra.

Mr Coulton said once completed the Inland Rail will transform freight movements between the nation's capitals, cutting 200 kilometres off the distance between Brisbane and Melbourne and 500 kilometres from Brisbane to Adelaide and Perth.

"The Inland Rail has been a huge boon for regional New South Wales, but concerns are now growing that projects are stalling under the Labor Government.

"Businesses in my electorate have geared up for ongoing work to deliver the Inland Rail; investments that have now been rendered uncertain by the Government," Mr Coulton said.

Mr Coulton said more than \$290 million has been invested in local businesses with 1,860 people employed on each of the Parkes to Narromine and Narrabri to North Star stretches of track. This includes more than 300 and 160 Indigenous people employed on each respective leg.

“We want to keep that momentum going to get this job done.”

Senator McKenzie said Treasurer Chalmers must heed the message from the independent Schott review Labor commissioned and restore the more than \$200 million in road funding for Inland Rail projects in the May budget.

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