

Media Statements

Minister for Transport and Main Roads The Honourable Mark Bailey

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Queensland: Inland Rail deal can be done with fairer funding

Ahead of a two-day Inland Rail conference in Toowoomba this week, the Palaszczuk Government has put the interstate rail freight project at the centre of funding negotiations with Canberra.

The Palaszczuk Government has written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack seeking increased and fast-tracked funding for projects across the state as part of an agreement on Inland Rail.

Canberra is being urged to increase funding by \$857 million and bring forward \$650 million worth of existing commitments on key Queensland projects, including Warrego Highway upgrades, the Bruce Highway, the Townsville to Roma inland road corridor and other regional roads funded under the Federal Government's Roads of Strategic Importance funding program.

The request follows clear signals sent in recent weeks by the Reserve Bank of Australia and Infrastructure Australia urging Mr Morrison to increase his government's funding for major infrastructure.

Queensland's offer to Canberra on Inland Rail comes with a caveat that any bilateral agreement needs to address the concerns about the project that have been raised by those living and working on the proposed rail corridor.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said there were other projects across Queensland that could also benefit from the Inland Rail deal.

"We have plenty of transport infrastructure needs in Queensland that need better support from the Morrison Government," he said.

"Roads maintenance supports local jobs, and we think federal funding for maintenance on the national network could be doubled to \$180 million per annum.

"Scott Morrison promised billions of dollars for Queensland before the election, but much of that funding won't flow for a number of years.

"We're having collaborative discussions with the Federal Government on Inland Rail, and we want to make sure other rail and road projects in Queensland are not neglected."

Mr Bailey said Inland Rail had the potential to deliver significant benefits to Queensland but highlighted outstanding issues the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) had failed to adequately address.

"Those concerns include impacts on operating farms, loss of agricultural land, floodplain issues, noise and social impacts," Mr Bailey said.

"Rural economies are already doing it tough, so the last thing those communities need is to lose valuable and productive land.

"Farmers have personally raised these concerns with me and our government for more than a year but feel they are not being listened to."

Mr Bailey said issues relating to the future rail connection to the Port of Brisbane and the Salisbury to Beaudesert future rail corridor also needed resolution along the Kagaru to Acacia Ridge section.

“Any increase in the number of freight trains passing through the Kagaru to Acacia Ridge section needs to be complemented by a passenger rail line from Salisbury to Beaudesert,” Mr Bailey said.

“It makes sense from a planning point of view to upgrade the rail corridor for freight and passenger services at the same time.

“Until improvements to the rail connection to the port can be resolved, and the passenger rail upgrade built, coal trains will need to continue using the existing West Moreton Rail System and freight container trains between Kagaru and Acacia Ridge would be limited to single stack.

“Our local MPs have been advocating for a better outcome on behalf of their communities from the project along that Kagaru to Acacia Ridge section.

“We want the best deal for Queensland, and one that considers and responds appropriately to Queenslanders before the project proceeds.”

ENDS

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