

MEDIA STATEMENT
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Rail freight industry welcomes Federal Budget funding for rail infrastructure resilience

The industry group representing Australia’s largest rail freight operators and infrastructure owners has welcomed an investment of more than \$1 billion to improve the resilience of the interstate rail network, supported by a \$540 million funding package by the Federal Government announced in tonight’s budget.

An additional funding commitment of more than \$500 million by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), via its Network Investment Program, will take the rail infrastructure resilience package to more than \$1 billion.

The package includes targeted projects aimed at preventing outages from flooding and severe weather events on the key east-west and north-south rail freight corridors that serve Australian consumers, industry and export sectors such as resources and agriculture. Investments will include the upgrade of existing crossing loops and culverts, track rehabilitation and re-railing, signalling works and sleeper replacements.

“This is a very welcome investment in improving the resilience, reliability and competitiveness of interstate rail freight services which are so vital for a healthy, growing Australian economy,” said Andrew Harding, Chair of the Freight on Rail Group (FORG) and Aurizon’s Managing Director & CEO.

“Improving the resilience of interstate rail infrastructure is a key priority of the Freight on Rail Group. More efficient and reliable rail freight supply chains are good for the economy because they enable increased investment by rail freight operators and customers to increase volumes on rail, and they also deliver community, safety and environmental benefits.

“As Australia moves rapidly to decarbonise transport supply chains, rail freight can do the heavy lifting for the nation because it is substantially more energy efficient and less carbon intensive than road transport.

“Flooding and high rainfall events have resulted in a number of significant outages to infrastructure in recent years. For example, on the east-west corridor between Sydney/Melbourne and Perth we have seen outages due to flooding averaging 40 days per year over the last three years.

“Given the importance of reducing the impacts from future weather events, FORG also supports the timely implementation of the infrastructure projects that will improve interstate rail freight resilience.”

FORG members contribute more than \$11 billion to Australia’s economy each year, employ almost 20,000 people, operate 1,600 freight locomotives and manage 23,000 kilometres of rail track. They include Arc Infrastructure, Aurizon, Australian Rail Track Corporation, One Rail Australia, Pacific National, Qube Holdings, SCT Logistics, Southern Shorthaul Railroad and Watco Australia.

Rail-based freight and logistics operations perform a vital role for Australia’s export industries and in domestic markets. FORG welcomes the government’s support and recognition of the importance of efficiently meeting future freight demand and continuing to improve the competitiveness of freight supply chains.

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