



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 1 November 2019

Calling for Information on Murray Basin Rail & a Rail Line to Portland

Stuart Grimley MP is calling for the Government to provide information about the current state of the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP), adding that there must also be investigation into the feasibility of a rail line from Portland to Maroona.

The MBRP, which would directly provide export opportunities for Geelong and Ballarat's rail ports, has been stalled and Mr Grimley voiced his concern that the State Government has not updated stakeholders including primary producers about the projects future that impacts their operations and investment.

This follows on from Party Leader and Former Senator Derryn Hinch's long-standing advocacy for the MBRP, calling the completion of the Portland line a "piece of cake".

The business case commissioned for the MBRP in 2012 didn't consider the poor condition of railway tracks amongst other additional costs and since this time there have been changes in regards to the availability of mineral sands as an export material.

In supporting a motion from colleague Tania Maxwell MP in Victoria's Parliament, Mr Grimley asked the Government to consider "greater community consultation" for regional rail projects and to fund a business case into the viability of financial investment in freight rail from Portland.

Ms Maxwell's motion asked for State Government Transport Infrastructure Minister Jacinta Allan to be present at a public meeting to discuss the stalled MBRP in Northern Victoria, due to the growing issues associated with the project and the lack of knowledge locals have about its future.

One of the major benefits of investing in this rail freight project is that it is estimated to remove 20,000 trucks trips from arterial and local roads. It is also more economical for primary producers.

In Mr Grimley's speech he stated that greater transparency is needed in Government as a fundamental democratic principle, saying "many Victorians have been left in the dark about the future of the basin".

Mr Grimley has on many occasions shown immense support for regional and rural communities in Parliament, in this case noting the exorbitant costs incurred by local Councils in repairing the hundreds of kilometres of local roads, often deteriorated due to trucks and heavy haulage.

The MBRP was expected to standardise the rail network, allowing for transportation of greater volumes of paddock to port and a boost to jobs and the regional economy, as well as removing thousands of truck trips off Victoria's roads.

Glenelg Shire – a local government area which covers Portland and surrounds – have been asking the state Government to consider the idea of Portland to Maroona rail and to provide a business case to evaluate the cost-to-benefit ratio and its feasibility.

Delays in the Murray Basin Rail project could have a significant impact on the upcoming harvest, jeopardising exports as a result of the reduced capacity to freight product.



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Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"I really value Government being transparent and in this case, there are stakeholders who feel like they are being kept in the dark about the Murray Basin Rail Project.

It's great that the Government have funded stage one and are completing the rail line from Ararat to Maryborough, but there are other opportunities including Portland to Maroona which local councils – and myself – believe should be investigated through a business case.

I've been a fierce advocate for regional and rural rail investment since I became an MP. Regional and rural Victoria grow the crops that we see on our plate at dinner time but which we also export to keep the state's economy turning. We need to continue to invest in growing these operations and making them more viable.

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