



STUART GRIMLEY MP

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

MEDIA RELEASE



Grimley Calls on Government to Support Murray Basin Freight Rail Project Standardisation

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Western Victorian MP Stuart Grimley has today asked the Minister for Transport and Transport Infrastructure to fund the Murray Basin Freight Rail Project's business case to standardise the network. This comes as the Federal Government has already committed the \$5 million for further planning of the project, which they've asked the State Government to match.

Mr Grimley included the \$5 million business case into standardising the network in his submission to the Treasurer for the May Budget.

Freight rail is becoming more important each year, as Victorian producers are having bigger and better harvests. According to the 2020 Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report, Victoria delivered a record \$14.5 Billion in exports and is well on the way to reach its target of \$20 Billion of exports by 2030. Being able to put their produce onto reliable, efficient transport and send it directly to a number of ports will be nothing but positive for our farmers.

The Murray Basin Freight Rail Project is pivotal to delivering these benefits for Victoria, especially the Western Victoria region.

Just a few months ago, the Transport Minister described the project as "At a future time, future governments can consider the standardisation of that part of the network" (ABC). Mr Grimley responded that simply kicking the can down the road and putting this important piece of infrastructure in the too hard basket.

Further, if the Minister believes that forward thinking is not required by current Governments, current metropolitan projects, such as the West Gate Tunnel Project, North-East Link and Airport Link should be an issue for "future Governments" also. Mr Grimley is pushing for the State Government to forward plan for regional rail, as it does with metropolitan rail projects.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"I have spoken to local councils and residents in the Wimmera and Mallee about the need for reliable and consistent freight rail. For them, developing a new business case to see the Murray Basin Freight Rail Project completed is a no brainer. Direct access to ports and cheaper transport costs will boost the local economy and improve businesses.

It is baffling that the government can commit to projects that are decades away from completion in the city, but cannot commit to future planning projects like the standardisation of regional rail in regional Victoria. Country Victorians do not accept the premise that the MBFRP is a problem for future governments.

The fact that the federal government has put \$5 million on the table to create a revised business plan for the track's standardisation is proof that it has merit. We need the state government to commit to \$5 million to get the revised business case for standardisation underway and our world-class produce to ports and to market faster."

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