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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ALC welcomes freight rail reset as focus shifts to system performance**

The Australian Logistics Council (ALC) has welcomed the Australian Government's reset of its approach to freight rail, with today's announcement marking a clear shift toward System performance.

The Government has committed \$1.75 billion to upgrade the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) network, alongside a \$55 million program to support greater use of rail and coastal shipping.

ALC Chief Executive Officer Dr Hermione Parsons said the scale and direction of the investment are significant.

"These are substantial investments, and they are well targeted," Dr Parsons said.

"Freight rail is significantly underutilised in Australia."

The investment is directed into the existing ARTC network, with targeted upgrades to track, signalling and key corridors across the East Coast and East-West routes, aimed at improving reliability, resilience and transit times.

"This is where the productivity and resilience gains are to be made," Dr Parsons said.

"Lifting performance across these corridors is what will shift how freight moves in Australia."

Dr Parsons said freight rail delivers clear operational and fuel efficiency advantages.

"Rail uses 5-times less diesel per tonne of freight than road and delivers lower emissions at scale," she said.

The Government has also confirmed it will consolidate Inland Rail, progressing construction between Beveridge and Parkes, while preserving the corridor north of Parkes, as recommended by the Schott Review of Inland Rail.

Dr Parsons said the decision reflects the realities of cost while keeping the longer-term national network in mind.

"Beveridge to Parkes provides a defined and deliverable section of the network," she said.



“The decision north of Parkes is also important. Preserving the corridor and protecting terminal sites keeps the pathway open.”

“Extending that connection into Queensland, including to Toowoomba, remains strategically important to completing a national freight network.”

The establishment of a dedicated coordinator within ARTC to work across infrastructure managers was also welcomed.

“The network does not operate in silos. Coordination across infrastructure managers is essential for harmonisation,” Dr Parsons said.

“Coordination and an investment in the strengthening of current assets is a practical and essential step for Australia’s future.”

The \$55 million program to support greater use of freight rail and coastal shipping was welcomed as a signal, but ALC said the underlying settings will determine whether freight shifts.

“Incentives have a role; however, the movement of freight happens when the system is competitive, reliable and connected.” Dr Parsons said.

“For freight rail, that comes back to access, pricing, pathing and how terminals connect into the network.”

“For coastal shipping, it is the potential development of a new mode of freight transport, utilised across the world, called short sea shipping.”

Dr Parsons said ALC’s position remains consistent.

“It is about the right mode for the right load. We need all four freight transport modes (air, sea, rail and road) available for operators,” she said.

“Shipping presents a real opportunity where it can relieve pressure on land networks and support lower-emissions freight movement – and is especially important in the current era of increasingly frequent and severe climate events”.

Dr Parsons said the announcement aligns with ALC’s long-standing advocacy that freight transport and freight logistics should be treated as national economic infrastructure, essential to sovereign capability.

“The constraint in this system has never been infrastructure alone,” she said.

“It sits in first and last mile access, terminal interfaces, corridor performance and how the network is priced and accessed.

“The ALC’s Freight Rail Taskforce brings together above and below rail operators with end-to-end supply chain businesses, including major customers, ports and the road operators. Together, we are working on practical reforms to increase freight rail utilisation, including improving corridor access, addressing pricing settings, supporting longer, heavier trains, and fixing first- and last-mile connections to intermodal terminals.

“This is where the next phase of work needs to sit,” Dr Parsons said.

“There is a real opportunity here to lift productivity, resilience and reliability across the system if the focus stays on what matters operationally.”

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