



## Darren Chester

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

## Dan Tehan

Federal Member for Wannon



## Jacinta Allan

Victorian Minister for Public Transport

## Jaala Pulford

Victorian Member for Western Victoria

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## Rail upgrades putting Murray Basin on fast track to growth

- **Work underway to standardise rail across regional Victoria under Stage 2 of the \$440 million Murray Basin Rail Project**
- **Project to better link regional industries with state's major ports, driving growth**
- **Works will take 20,000 trucks off roads each year, cutting crashes and emissions**

Works are underway on the second stage of the \$440 million Murray Basin Rail Project, continuing the upgrade and the conversion of over 1,000 kilometres of track to standard gauge - providing better rail freight services and improved freight access to major ports.

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester, Victorian Minister for Public Transport Jacinta Allan and Federal Member for Wannon Dan Tehan inspected equipment and met rail workers at Maryborough today.

Preliminary works along the line are already underway including vegetation removal and site investigations. Works are also set to begin in Dunolly, delivering major upgrades to the Mildura freight rail line.

Crews will upgrade and standardise the track from Dunolly to Yelta, and Ouyen to Murrayville, as well as reopening the Maryborough to Ararat line. The works will increase train axle loadings from 19 tonnes to 21 tonnes between Dunolly and Yelta, and Maryborough to Ararat to allow freight trains to carry heavier loads.

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester said the project would provide better rail access between the Murray Basin and Victoria's major ports at Portland, Geelong and Melbourne.

"Improving the performance of the regional Victorian rail freight network will bolster the state's agricultural sector, drive economic growth, help create jobs and boost regional communities," Mr Chester said.

"The Murray Basin Rail Project will standardise rail gauges and increase maximum freight volumes, allowing higher volumes of goods to be carried more efficiently."

Victorian Minister for Public Transport Jacinta Allan said this was great news for regional Victoria and we're getting on with transforming Victoria's rail freight network.

"We're boosting capacity, safety and reliability of freight services in regional Victoria so we can meet the future growth of the region," Ms Allan said.

"This much-needed project will enable primary producers to move produce to market, more efficiently."

Federal Member for Wannon Dan Tehan said the upgrade project itself would also benefit employment in the region.

“More than 400 people will be employed on the project at its peak with up to 60 local jobs generated in the Central Goldfields Shire,” Mr Tehan said.

“The Murray Basin Rail Project will ultimately enable trains to carry up to 500,000 more tonnes of grain each year and capture about 20,000 journeys currently undertaken by trucks, improving road safety and the road network for all those who use our local roads.”

Victorian Member for Western Region Jaala Pulford said this vital project will create hundreds of jobs and allow our primary producers to get their goods to market, more efficiently – supporting local regional communities.

“The Murray Basin Rail project will standardise and upgrade the freight network across north western Victoria and return freight trains to the Maryborough to Ararat line for the first time in more than a decade,” Ms Pulford said.

“It will support farmers, their families and local jobs – and I’m so pleased to see work start on stage two of this vital project.”

The Sea Lake and Manangatang lines will remain open during this time and freight operators can consider using these lines as another option to keep moving freight by rail with works being scheduled outside of grain harvest seasons.

Work on the Mildura line will start on 7 August, requiring the closure of the line north of Dunolly for the next five months to ensure the safety of work crews.

The \$440 million Murray Basin Freight Rail Project is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments, with both contributing up to \$220 million.

#### **Media Contacts**

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<b>For Mr Chester:</b>	<b>Kerri Griffiths</b>	<b>0417 617 482</b>
<b>For Ms Allan:</b>	<b>Ben McNair</b>	<b>0400 378 197</b>
<b>For Mr Tehan:</b>	<b>Cate Mercer-Grant</b>	<b>0408 564 232</b>
<b>For Ms Pulford:</b>	<b>Tom Whitty</b>	<b>0488 084 717</b>