ARTC

MEDIA RELEASE

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INCREASED RAIL PAYLOADS FOR NSW FARMERS

- **Track tonnages increased between Narrabri – Moree**
- **Allows 11 extra tonnes per wagon – all payload**

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) has just signed off on a six-month trial that will bring big productivity improvements for North West NSW farmers.

It follows an in-depth 12 month review and risk assessment process which has enabled heavier loads on the 100 kilometre railway line between Moree and Narrabri.

The process included running the largest grain train in Australian history in December.

“Producers have been saying for years in order to become more competitive they want improvements in the supply chain and that rail is the most cost-effective and efficient way to do it,” said ARTC’s Executive General Manager – Hunter Valley, Jonathan Vandervoort.

“Well, North West farmers looking to shift the last of the 2015-16 grain harvest and summer sorghum crops have the opportunity today to realise significant transport savings by using rail.”

ARTC has increased track weight tonnages by 15 per cent and is also increasing standard train lengths on offer to 1000m, up from the current longest length at 850m.

“Conservatively we think farmers and producers can realise around $2 to $3 per tonne in savings as a result of the increase in axle loads alone, add in an increase in length and the savings are multiplied” said Mr Vandervoort.

“And it is a progressive improvement, giving more back to the farmer with no hard infrastructure cost.

“In only two years we have moved from 19 tonne axle load, 40 wagon trains; to now 70 wagon trains at 1000m in length and 23 tonne axle loadings.

“That delivers an extra 11 tonnes of freight per wagon, straight payload,” Mr Vandervoort said.

“What this pricing differential also does is start to enlarge the geographic catchment for rail to attract more freight– because of the cost savings and efficiencies now possible.”

“The introduction of this size of train is also a bonus for our other customers as it improves network capacity by reducing the overall number of interactions between trains, decreasing the variations in freight cycle time and passenger train performance.”

“We are determined to continue pushing the envelope and finding smart ways of delivering more to our customers for less.”

Over the next six months ARTC will be reviewing the performance of the heavier, longer trains running along this section of track. The larger, heavier, loaded trains will operate at 50 km/hr during this time.

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Background:

- In December 2015, ARTC ran the largest grain train in Australian history from Moree to the Port of Newcastle. That trial run was part of ARTC's wider review to test the capability of the rail network and run trains at longer lengths and heavier weights. Find out more here: www.artc.com.au/megatrain

- Wagons previously had a 20.25 tonne axle load rating along this section of track – meaning wagons were not loaded to capacity in order to meet track weight standards. By increasing the axle loading to 23 tonnes, farmers get an extra 11 tonnes per wagon (81 tonne to 92 tonne gross weight per wagon) as well as the chance to run even longer trains.

- ARTC has been working collaboratively with the agri-sector to understand key constraints and associated cost impediments to moving product by rail. In addition to working on long term sustainable outcomes with this group we also saw an immediate opportunity to leverage off the investment within the Hunter Valley coal network in order to maximise wagon loads from a large grain producing region.

- The initial assessment process to increase the tonnages involved experts from across the ARTC business as well as working with our above rail operators. We have applied knowledge gained from building and modernising our network across Australia including our work to upgrade the Gunnedah Basin to 30 tonne axle loads.

- The six-month trial will involve detailed track monitoring and assessment to ascertain impacts and potential for increased maintenance costs - utilising specialists from the Institute of Rail Technology.