



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

2nd December 2001

Victorian Interstate Rail – now up to speed

From midnight Sunday a significant step will be taken by Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in providing uniformity across Australia's interstate rail network.

An increase in the maximum allowable limits for axle loads and speeds on Victorian sections of the interstate network means that rail freight operators will benefit from improved reliability and transit times on major interstate rail corridors.

These increases will bring all interstate tracks in Victoria up to speed and provide a uniform set of standards for wagon axle loads and train speeds across the ARTC managed network from Albury through to Kalgoorlie and from Broken Hill to Port Augusta.

ARTC Managing Director, David Marchant said, "A major thrust of rail industry reform has been the need to achieve greater uniformity across the interstate rail network. The changes to allowable limits implemented this weekend are a major step in achieving this goal."

"Train operators will benefit from greater consistency and certainty when planning rail operations over the ARTC network. They will only have to deal with one set of standards for wagonloads and speeds over 3600 kilometres of the interstate rail network in Victoria and South Australia."

The new limits have been made possible through a targetted two-year program of ARTC and Commonwealth funded track infrastructure upgrades. A major project in Victoria was the recently completed \$30 million upgrade of the North East rail corridor between Melbourne and Albury. This has been awarded the prestigious National Transport Outcomes Award for transport achievement and innovation. From midnight 30 November 2001 the following standards for axle loads and speeds will apply across the ARTC Victorian network and which already apply to the remainder of the ARTC network.

- 23 tonne axle load for 'standard' train class services at 80 Km/h
- 21 tonne axle load for 'high' train class services at 110 Km/h
- 20 tonne axle load for 'premium' train class services at 115 Km/h

When ARTC took over the Victorian interstate track 3 years ago, the maximum axle load was 19 tonnes and speeds for most train services were limited in many places to 80 Km/h.

These new limits are in line with the Australian Transport Council (ATC) standards laid down by Federal and State Transport Ministers for the interstate rail network.



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Previously, up to 20% of the Victorian interstate track was under some form of temporary speed restriction. Under ARTC management this figure is now consistently below the ATC standard of 2%.

David Marchant concluded by saying, "The interstate track in Victoria is now able to carry heavier loads at higher speeds with greater reliability and safety. This combined with improved track reliability will enable train operators to offer more competitive rail freight services on key interstate freight corridors."

"If the cost-effective and sound engineering practices that have been applied in Victoria can be undertaken between Albury and Sydney, then rail will be in a position to reverse the decline in traffic levels and gain back traffic lost to road on the strategic Melbourne to Sydney freight corridor."

"Through the provision of greater reliability, reduced transit times and increased network capacity, rail is showing that it can deliver a competitive and attractive alternative to road transport."