



ARTC Increases Hunter Valley Rail Investment

Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) announced today an almost doubling from \$153 million to \$270 million – of proposed investment in infrastructure upgrades and enhancements on the Hunter Valley coal rail network.

ARTC Chief Executive Officer, David Marchant, told a meeting of coal and transport industry leaders in Newcastle that the additional capital expenditure was a reflection of the need for increased track capacity to meet the rapid growth in coal export demand.

“ARTC intends to ensure track capacity runs ahead of demand,” Mr Marchant said.

“Over the next five years, our infrastructure investment will see the network more than meet demand growth, which industry has forecast to rise from the 85 million tonnes per annum this year to just on 140 million tonnes by 2009.

“Since ARTC took over the lease for the NSW mainline track and the Hunter Valley coal network last year, we’ve reviewed demand, capacity, efficiencies, consulted with the industry and studied the NSW Government’s plan for increased export coal loader throughput.

“The result is a strategy for improvement of the coal network that will meet projected demand as well as increasing efficiencies and safety over the 452 kilometres of track,” he said.

Details of the upgrade include extensive signaling works, critical track duplication, construction of a flyover at Sandgate, which will separate coal trains from passenger and general freight services, junction upgrades and new and lengthened passing loops.

“Throughout the lower Hunter section of the network, we will have the ability to run trains at no more than 10 minutes apart, which will harmonise the currently uneven operations and increase efficiencies while maintaining the overall safety and integrity of the network,” Mr Marchant said.

“The individual projects will come on line progressively and each one will increase the overall capacity of the network ahead of projected demand, ensuring that the needs of the vital coal export trade are met, from mine head to coal loader.”