



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

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Rail Freight boom defies trends

Despite weaker economic forecasts, freight traffic over the Australian Rail Track Corporation managed segment of the interstate rail network continues to boom. For the second consecutive month rail freight volumes have reached record levels.

During October 2.56 billion gross tonne kilometres (GTK) were carried over the ARTC network and in November this rose again to over 2.57 billion GTK. This represents an increase in GTK of 18 % and 9.1 % respectively over the comparative months last year.

ARTC Managing Director, David Marchant said, "These results are extraordinary in anyone's language. They defy underlying trends in the global economy and outstrip growth figures for the domestic economy. Obviously business and industry are beginning to recognise the superior benefits and cost effectiveness of the modern rail industry."

"Rail is clearly improving its market share of the nation's freight task, which will deliver significant economic and community benefits through improved transport links and safer roads."

ARTC and Commonwealth Government investment over the last three years has been directed at improving transit times and increasing the reliability and capacity of the ARTC network. These works have included:

Extended passing loops to allow longer trains to run - 1.8 kilometres long between Adelaide and Perth and 1.5 kilometres long between Albury, Melbourne and Adelaide, Track upgrading across the ARTC network to allow for heavier and faster trains, Upgraded signalling and communications to improve on-time running and network reliability.

David Marchant said, "Improved reliability, reduced transit times and increased capacity over the ARTC network provide train operators with the ability to deliver more efficient and cost effective rail freight services to their clients."

"These record volumes give some credence to suggestions that Australia is managing the global economic downturn quite well. Transport movements, and especially rail movements, are a good barometer of economic activity. While we will be doing our utmost to maintain this current momentum we expect business to slow slightly during the New Year, but also expect that rail will maintain its record market share on the East West corridor."