



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

MEDIA RELEASE

Construction on Minimbah Bank Third Rail Project Moves Into Full Swing

Construction work has stepped up a gear this week on a critical rail upgrade project to improve reliability and capacity of the Hunter Valley Rail Network to Newcastle, spearheaded by Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

A part of the Australian Government's \$1.2 billion National Building package, includes a contribution towards the \$134 million first stage of the project, known as the Minimbah Bank Third Rail Line. This project involves the construction of approximately 10 kilometres of third rail track from Minimbah, west of Belford to Whittingham.

Prime Minister the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP turned the first sod on this project on 14th May 2009.

ARTC CEO David Marchant said the construction work for Stage 1 is expected to be completed by early 2010.

"This is a vitally important project as part of the Federal Government's national building package to meet the forecasted increase in demand for export and domestic coal in the Hunter Valley,"

"Without the upgrade to the Main Northern Rail network, coal exported from the Hunter Valley through the Port of Newcastle could start to be constrained from 2015."

ARTC recently formed the Hunter 8 Alliance with John Holland Pty Ltd and GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) to design and build the new track with the project involving two concurrent stages.

Stage 1, from Minimbah to Whittingham, received approval from the Minister for Planning under *Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979* on 22nd May 2009.

The Alliance is currently undertaking an Environmental Assessment and preliminary design work for Stage 2, a third track of 32 kilometres from Maitland to Minimbah, known as the Maitland to Minimbah Third Track.

Mr Marchant said ARTC was committed to the rail infrastructure upgrades as part of their Hunter Valley Capacity Improvement Strategy.

"Our strategy seeks to keep the rail system capacity ahead of industry demands and we have taken another important step today with construction of the Minimbah Bank Third Rail Line Project moving into full swing," he said.

"The Hunter Valley projects will also bring benefits to the community with an estimated 650 full-time jobs generated during construction and opportunities for local and regional goods and services providers.

The Hunter 8 Alliance has prepared a number of Environmental and Community Management Plans to identify specific measures to reduce impacts to the environment and the local community during construction.

An independent Environmental Representative has been engaged to review the environmental performance during construction, in accordance with NSW Department of Planning requirements, to safeguard any community concerns.

For more information about the Project, please contact the community information line on 1800 216 317 or visit the website www.hunter8alliance.com.au. Road works and possible disruptions will be reported on the project website.

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