



**Joel Fitzgibbon**  
Federal Member for Hunter

**David Marchant**  
Chief Executive Officer

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### **MINIMBAH BANK THIRD TRACK PROJECT COMPLETED**

Member for Hunter Joel Fitzgibbon officially opened another big Hunter infrastructure project today.

The opening is a key milestone in the project to increase capacity on the Hunter Valley coal lines with today's official opening of Australian Rail Track Corporation's (ARTC) \$134 million Minimbah Bank Third Track at Wittingham NSW.

Brought forward as part of the Rudd Labor Government's \$1.2 billion National Building package, the Minimbah Bank Third Track project has seen the construction of a third rail track on the Main Northern Railway in an area known as the Minimbah Bank.

On hand to officially open the rail link by 'calling through' the first train, Federal Member for the Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon, explained that the project will facilitate the more efficient movement of freight to the Port of Newcastle by improving the grade of the track.

"Instead of a steep climb up Minimbah Bank, which slows down the trains, the new track has a more gradual climb which will enable trains to maintain better speeds, reducing journey times and increasing locomotive efficiency," Mr Fitzgibbon said. "The Minimbah Bank Third Track project is primarily about boosting capacity on the rail corridor to allow more freight to be transported to the Port of Newcastle.

"Importantly, this project created jobs. Local communities in the Hunter benefited from the generation of more than 150 fulltime jobs during construction as well as securing existing local jobs and businesses."

Specifically the Project has widened the existing rail formation to accommodate the third track.

Due to the existing steep grade (1:80), trains slow down thereby increasing the time taken to clear the section before another train can enter. This reduces capacity as fewer trains can use this particular section per hour relative to adjoining sections.

The slower speeds reduce the line capacity and in the event a train stalls on the grade there is no alternative route for following trains to take.

By improving the grade of the rail, speed and efficiency of the rail line will now be increased.

Major infrastructure elements included in the Project are as follows:

- Approximately 10.8 km of track including turnouts, junctions and signalling;
- Approximately 10.8 km of earthworks including drainage and minor structures;
- A rail underbridge (major culvert) at the western end of the project route;
- Grade separation of Range Road level crossing;
- A new rail underbridge at Mudies Creek;
- A new rail overbridge and associated road works at the Golden Highway; and
- A retaining wall of approximately four metres in height and 540 metres in length to retain the third track fill batter from encroaching on the New England Highway road reserve.

ARTC CEO David Marchant said the Minimbah Bank Third Track project has been a key part of ARTC's ongoing plan to keep rail capacity ahead of market demand for Hunter Valley coal.

"At present, the Hunter Valley rail network coal capacity averages around 107 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). Current industry forecasts indicate demand on the Hunter Valley rail network will increase to 165 mtpa by March 2012," he said.

"ARTC is therefore implementing a strategy of line improvements endeavouring to keep system capacity ahead of industry demands. Completion of the Minimbah Bank Third Track is a key component in meeting the objectives of the Strategy," Mr Marchant said.

Stage two of the Minimbah Bank upgrade will commence later this year.

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**Media Contacts:**

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