



**Anthony Albanese**  
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

**John Fullerton**  
Chief Executive Officer

### **ECONOMIC STIMULUS DELIVERS FASTER, MORE RELIABLE RAIL NETWORK**

From this weekend, the interstate rail network connecting Australia's east and west coasts via the NSW towns of Parkes and Cootamundra will be able to carry more freight at faster speeds than ever before, a real and lasting legacy of the Federal Labor Government's Economic Stimulus Plan.

Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, said the extensive modernisation of the interstate rail network brought about by the highly successful Economic Stimulus Plan is beginning to deliver long term dividends.

"For the biggest freight trains, the average travel times between Sydney and Perth via western NSW has been **cut by almost an hour** as a result of our decision to upgrade the Cootamundra to Parkes line with stimulus money," said Mr Albanese.

"This \$91.3 million stimulus project replaced all the old wooden sleepers with 301,000 new concrete sleepers, giving the 201 kilometre line the capacity to carry bigger trains at faster speed all year round.

"All up, the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) received \$1.2 billion in stimulus funding, the largest single investment in the interstate rail network since the Fisher Labor Government built the transcontinental railway almost a century ago.

"Indeed by 2014 we will have rebuilt more than a third of the network – or 3,771 kilometres of existing track – and extended its reach by a further 235 kilometres, an outcome which will deliver even lower travel times on all routes.

"A faster, safer and more reliable rail network is central to the Gillard Labor Government's broader efforts to boost national productivity, take pressure off our highways and reduce Australia's carbon footprint."

For the first time, superfreighters running East to West using the Cootamundra to Parkes route will now be able to run 21 tonne axle loads at 100kph. Previously, trains were only able to travel with 19 tonne axle loads at 100kph or 21 tonne axle loads at 80kph due to the limits of the track.

ARTC CEO, John Fullerton, said the Cootamundra to Parkes project was a clear example of how rail infrastructure investment leads to productivity gains.

"When you upgrade a complex piece of transport infrastructure such as the interstate rail freight network, it can be difficult to point to one specific project and quantify its specific benefits. The capacity and efficiency improvements are seen in the overall performance of the network," said Mr Fullerton.

“However in the case of the Parkes to Cootamundra concrete resleepering project, we can see a measurable improvement in capacity and reduction in transit time with the increase in axle loads from this weekend.

“This is part of ARTC’s ongoing commitment to deliver results in terms of increasing the capacity of rail freight thereby increasing its value to the national freight logistics market.

“Our aim is to get more freight off road and onto rail over long haul routes, and the increased volumes East to West between Cootamundra and Parkes is another major step forward in achieving that goal.”

Mr Fullerton explained that this was not only good news for the resurgence in rail freight and for the Australian economy as a whole, but also for the local community.

“The ongoing development of the interstate rail freight network will see rail becoming more competitive, and as each 1500 metre long train can replace 100 semi-trailers, we could see fewer trucks on our major roads,” said Mr Fullerton.

**Saturday, 26 February 2011**

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