



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

MEDIA RELEASE

INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT SUPPORTS ARTC'S UPGRADES TO THE SYDNEY - MELBOURNE RAIL LINE

The preliminary findings of an independent assessment have revealed that Australian Rail Track Corporation's method of laying concrete sleepers as part of the multi-billion dollar upgrade of the rail line between Sydney and Melbourne is acceptable, appropriate and is carried out on other networks in Australia and overseas.

The recent problem of mud holes that have affected areas of the Main Line between Sydney and Melbourne has been as a result of heavy rain and not the laying of concrete sleepers.

Specifically the preliminary findings of the assessment found:

- the side-insertion method of resleeping used by ARTC is an acceptable methodology for concrete resleeping, both within Australia and internationally;
- ARTC's approach to construction and maintenance on the line is appropriate and compares favourably with other networks in Australia and overseas;

The assessment also provides helpful guidelines to minimise future occurrences of mud holes in respect to the Melbourne to Sydney line and other projects on the interstate rail network.

ARTC CEO, John Fullerton explained that an independent assessor was commissioned to conduct a comprehensive study into the upgrade of the Main South Line following the recent spate of mud holes as a result of heavy rain.

"Safety is paramount to ARTC. We wanted to be absolutely certain that the method used to upgrade the line between Sydney and Melbourne with concrete sleepers was safe, reliable and appropriate for the conditions," Mr Fullerton said.

"This independent assessment clearly concludes that our methods are sound."

"Importantly, the findings decisively refute the misleading claims of certain parties that the side-insertion method used to lay the concrete sleepers has caused the problem of mud holes on the line."

"This should be the end of these nonsensical claims," Mr Fullerton said.

Mr Fullerton explained that while mud holes are an unfortunate and unwelcome result of heavy rain, what is important is that when mud holes occur, they are quickly dealt with.

“Rectification work to fix the mud holes on the Main South Line is progressing, with over two thirds of the work completed and the remainder to be finalised in the near future,” he said.

“Under difficult weather conditions ARTC teams have worked quickly to tackle the mud holes on the Main South line and should be congratulated for their expediency. This similarly applies to other ARTC maintenance teams who have had to respond to serious flooding events across the rail network in response to the extreme weather conditions over the past six months.”

“The fact is ARTC has significantly improved the quality of the Main South line after decades of neglect through a \$2.6 billion upgrading program between Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne,” Mr Fullerton said.

This work has included the construction of new passing loops, replacing derailment-prone, life-expired timber sleepers with new concrete sleepers, renewing many kilometres of steel rail and installing new digital signalling.

The track today is better, provides improved transit times and offers more capacity to our customers.

Issued: **Wednesday 6th April 2010**

Contact: **Brad Emery** **0419 297 004**