

Media Release

The Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Fishing and Boating



Tuesday, 14 June 2022

KEEPING THE RAIL FREIGHT NETWORK MOVING IN MILDURA

The Andrews Labor Government is continuing to boost the rail freight network in Mildura – making it safer, easier and quicker for freight operators and farmers to transport their local produce to port.

Minister for Ports and Freight Melissa Horne today visited citrus exporter Mildura Fruit Company and freight provider Seaway Intermodal – which plays a crucial role in moving fruit, wine, grain and peas – and will benefit from works soon to be carried out to upgrade the rail freight corridor.

The works will allow for heavier and more frequent trains to operate on freight rail between Mildura and the Port of Melbourne and will get underway in coming months.

The works include siding extension works at Merbein near Mildura, to allow 1200m-long trains to stable away from the main line so grain trains can run more frequently to Yelta, ahead of what is expected to be another bumper grain season.

Crossing loops further south will also be extended to allow opposing 1200m-long freight trains to pass each other and increase the current Seaway service between Mildura to the Port of Melbourne from three to five days a week, moving thousands more tonnes of freight by rail and removing thousands of trucks from local roads.

An average loaded 800m long intermodal freight train carries a massive \$2.25 million worth of produce – which is the equivalent of 55 semi-trailers removed from local roads, making our roads safer and reducing carbon emissions.

Packed citrus product from the Mildura Fruit Company (MFC) forms a major portion of Seaway Intermodal's freight business, with approximately 5000 containers of produce moved per annum by rail from MFC alone.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* will deliver \$181 million for critical maintenance works on the regional rail freight network to improve rail freight competitiveness and support the growing freight task that is vital to regional economies and supply chains.

In addition, a further \$3.5 million has been allocated to extend the Mode Shift Incentive Scheme (MSIS). The MSIS supports more than 170 freight industry jobs at intermodal terminals in regional Victoria – including Seaway Intermodal – and removes the equivalent of 28,000 truck trips from the state's roads every year.

The works are being delivered by Rail Projects Victoria as part of the Murray Basin Rail Project and support 1,000 direct and indirect jobs during delivery. Upgrade works have also recently been carried out on the Mildura line to improve the condition of the track and reduce the risk of infrastructure faults which can delay grain loading.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Ports and Freight Melissa Horne

"We're keeping the rail freight network moving in Mildura and ensuring we are continuing to support our famers and freight operators by making it easier and quicker for them to transport their local produce."

"These works will provide a huge benefit – allowing for more frequent and heavier services of fruit, wine, grain and peas to operate on freight trains between Mildura and the Port of Melbourne."

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