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Check against delivery

Thank you very much for that introduction.

What I’m going to talk about is inland rail. I’m going to talk about what we’re on about, how we will do it going forward, what’s been done to date. And perhaps most importantly, where we are going and some of the lessons learned from this great conference over the last couple of days. I’ve certainly had an opportunity to learn a lot from all of you.

When we talk about Inland Rail what I’d like to say is that it really is all about connecting Australia and not just connecting Australia physically. It goes well beyond that and it goes into not only connecting what hasn’t been connected before, but providing flexibility and enabling the supply chain. A supply chain that can be something totally different in the future than it is today.

And as we heard yesterday from some of the clients there are some simple and clear goals – it not only has to be connected, but it has to be very fast. We have to shave at least 10 hours off the time and get it down to 24 hours or less. And that’s no small challenge but very important to the customers.

That means it has to be very straight and very flat. And it has to be reliable which it is not today, and we certainly don’t have consistency. And it’s very hard to automate and optimize things when you don’t have predictability and consistency.

We were also asked to go beyond that and asked to provide even greater benefits for the overall community as we spend this money and make great changes across this country.

We’re going to provide over 16 000 jobs and we’re going to add over $16 billion to the economy and that’s beyond just what we’re spending to do the construction and development work that we’re doing.

It’s also going to help meet a very big challenge in this country. Which is meeting the freight challenge we’ve all been talking about over the last couple of days.

What’s important about that is not only is it tripling in the not too distant future, but Inland Rail adds the capacity and the ability to go even further. But as we’re doing that if we don’t change what we’re doing if we don’t put Inland Rail in place and the distribution between rail and freight stays where it is today this is what it’s going to look like (refers to presentation slide).
With Inland Rail though we can shift that dramatically and we can shift what would have been a huge increase in road traffic to being able to mitigate that very clearly and getting over 200,000 trucks off the road.

What does that do? It does a lot of things and it’s talked about in the business case for those of you have the chance to read the business case.

But it also provides a safer environment. It provides a safer environment for those that are near and dear to us. I have a twenty-one year old daughter who loves to travel this country with her friends. She’s on the roads late at night going from one place to another. I would feel a lot better about 200,000 less trucks on the road for her, her kids, her grandkids and their grandkids.

And we have an opportunity to do that, while putting less pressure on the coastal route which we’ve talked about.

There are also other benefits. For example; there are some great benefits for regional Australia. For food and fibre and cotton as a number of speakers have talked about previously as long as the connectivity is there.

It’s great to see that our leadership understands this and are making proactive investment when you listen to Melissa Pavey and the $1.1 Billion that’s going into the country rail network. That’s what’s going to make this a reality. But it also goes beyond regional Australia.

In fact, it has very important benefits for the capital cities. However, one point I would like to make is that although the port connections are important the business case for Inland Rail does not rely on them. That is all an upside – what a great situation to be in. To have a business case that’s stands on its own with a tremendous upside for the future. The only issue is the time in figuring that out. Everyone knows it needs to be done at some point. I agree with the comment of the earlier question from speaker that the clock is ticking, and it needs to be addressed.

But we do have an overall network that can provide great benefits domestically to Australians. Products being sold within the country across the capital cities while enabling the supply chain in the regions.

So now a little bit about the how. The how of what we’re doing across Inland Rail is that we have great support from the government but we’re also working with the private sector and hand in hand with the community. As its previously been pointed out, 1700 kilometres across I don’t even know how many electoral districts and millions of people, we have a great necessity to work hand in hand with that community at each step along the way.

The government has provided tremendous support not only financially, but you saw over the last 24 hours. And I can’t say enough about the support I get from the Deputy Prime Minister and from other Ministers. From Scotty Buchholz in Queensland and Mark Coulton here and Melissa Pavey. All very good supporters very much working with us going forward and helping us make this a reality.

And even as Warren Truss can attest to following our recent opportunity to spend some time with Prime Minister Turnbull and cabinet – there’s great support at that level. Everyone understands what needs to be done and are resolved to make this
happen because it’s been tried before, and it hasn’t happened, and the benefits are just too great to walk away from.

So as we go forward I’ll talk a little bit about Partnership with the Private Sector, and what’s known as a PPP. Very large investment where the private sector is taking some risk and making a very direct investment in this program. There’s a multitude of indirect investment going on out there too.

There’s some great ideas and whether that’s about additional quarry supply or water supply, precast concrete. Many ideas being generated largely by local councils and being pushed out and picked up by the private sector.

I also want everyone to understand when we talk about the PPP that we’re not just talking about is a risk sharing entity it goes well beyond that and what we’re really trying to get in partnering with the private sector is innovation. And that’s why the PPP is targeted at the most complicated route because it’s that complication that will drive innovation. However, if we want innovation it is imperative that we are careful that we’re not overly prescriptive and kill innovation. We have to be careful of our historic standards and regulations because if we’re not they could limit our ability to bring that innovation to bear.

So, the government is very supportive, the private sector is working in partnership, they’re taking risk and making the investments but in the end our success is going to be how we work hand in hand with the community. That’s the crux of the issue. We all need to acknowledge that we’re working in Greenfields sites working across idyllic areas of Australia.

I had the opportunity to travel the route and parts where there’s no track now and no one ever expected it to be there.

We have to acknowledge that we’re changing that reality. We also have to acknowledge even in the brownfield areas where there is a line, there is a fear of the unknown and we have an obligation to take that unknown and make it known. The fear of noise, dust and flooding are very real concerns and we need to work with the community to make sure they understand what that reality will be.

And in doing so, we have to be human. We have to be real. We have to work to engage with the community as the diagram shows (refers to slide presentation) but we also have to listen and hear. Listening is important. Listening doesn’t matter if you don’t hear what the real issues are.

Because if you don’t hear the real issues you can’t have empathy and the only way to deal with affected individuals is to have empathy for their situation. And try to make the situation a little bit better. And importantly we need to respond. Our people need to get back to people quickly. Give them some certainty. It’s not always good news but it is our obligation to give them some certainty with what they have to deal with.

As we move forward, we’ve come a long way and we’re going to continue to move forward but we need to be understanding of a lot of hard work by a lot of honourable people.

This has been going on a long time and it goes back to both sides of parliament supporting it and goes back to some very key individuals, Warren Truss being a key
individual along this chain. But driving studies that ultimately got us to where we are today. When this started this could’ve been along the east coast of Australia, right on our coastal route.

It could have been in the Hunter Valley. Could have been between here (Parkes) and the Hunter Valley but it wound up here through some very good work that this was the only way to make the business case work. To keep the route flat. To keep the route straight. To get those times required and to get the reliability customers need. The issue is now it’s real. In the past a lot of people could romantically believe it wasn’t going to happen and perhaps didn’t pay as much attention as they would have liked.

But now they can see it’s real. So now we have the tough time beginning and the tough work has to be done. And we’re going to do it to the highest standards and every requirement that is out there. We’re going to do it according to codes and standards that each state has and they have numerous ones and they’re not all the same. And we’re going to meet them.

But we’re going to hold ourselves to an even higher standard. Because it is about engaging with the community and it means we have to be proactive. We have to take the extra step. And so we’re forming and participating with Community Consultative Committees (CCC) all along the route. Now we don’t have to do this. It is best practice, but we don’t have to do it. We’re going to go beyond what’s required in the EIS and have an ongoing project lifecycle dialogue with the community so that they know how they can access us and they can make their voice heard.

In my experience this is very vital because it allows some of the emotion to be let out of the dialogue. You first have to let it out. Then you have to talk about it and it all takes time.

But it also gets us the information we need about how farmers operate their properties, what their day to day struggles are. How we can make their reality a little bit better? What are their concerns and are there things we can do since we’re spending a lot of money anyway let’s help alleviate some of those concerns.

So now I’ll move on to what’s been done. Quite a lot really. We have a study area from Melbourne to Brisbane and that’s taken a lot of hard work. No small feat and that’s taken us a long time to get here. We had 990 Lease Access Agreements in place but perhaps one of the best definitions of where we are today is we have $250 Million underway. By the end of next month we’ll have $600 Million underway and by this time next year we’ll have $1.2 Billion underway. Now I have to say that is almost all in New South Wales.

Queensland needs to get on board and we need to get moving. We need an IGA in place and the benefits can start to flow in Queensland. We have huge industry interest. Many people are trying to get involved and we’re trying to package this work so that many people can have the opportunity not just tier one contractors although we very much want their help along the way and there are parts that are very much geared at tier one global competitors like the PPP sections.

But the other sections we’re trying to package so that tier two and others can and will be involved. And we’ll drive spending in local communities and we’ll provide employment and working with our friends across Department of Infrastructure.
Regional Development and Cities providing jobs and training for people going forward.

So with that interest we have momentum and where are we going. What you will see in the next year is we will continue our commitment to communities, we will commence construction very quickly. We will keep the PPP on track and it is important since it is driving our critical path at the present time.

And we will get even more construction underway and we will finalise our plan. I’ve been onboard for 50 working days. It’s been a great learning opportunity but also I see opportunities to improve, to accelerate and to optimise. We’re going to identify those going forward.

What I’d like to do in closing, is reflect a little bit. This conference has been absolutely fantastic for me. It’s given me the chance to reflect a little bit on what does this all mean and it’s true we are in the golden age of infrastructure and that’s a great environment to be in, but it does bring with it realities and some challenges. Resourcing being a major one. What it also does is catalyse some great thinking and some great leadership as we’ve seen over the last day or two.

We have leadership at the state level stepping up, spending over a billion dollars on the country rail network and thinking ahead how additional investments can be made to optimise the ones already underway.

We have great leadership at the council level thinking ahead about inland ports whether it’s Parkes or Toowoomba or Moree or other areas. They’re being proactive trying to drive investment in their communities.

I can’t say how impressed I am in when I sit down with local country shire council representation and they talk about their thoughts about how to engage the private sector, where are the needs, how to get things going and can their community participate.

There’s also leadership in the private sector driving intermodal terminals and shifting added value activities from where they are today out to the regional areas. Value adding activities like food processing and others that can be done in these lower cost areas and provide a completed product to get into market.

So is that what this really means? Is it that Inland Rail is the enabler that allows these tangibles to occur? Or is it even greater than that? Is it the enabler to an innovative, entirely new supply chain? Innovation made possible and real because Inland Rail drives the speed, the reliability, the consistency, the predictability and the efficiency to allow that supply chain to flourish. And ultimately allow that supply chain to be automated and big data to flourish. It takes us to a new way of doing business – a new reality of how and where to source products – a new reality of how and when we can get them to market.

A new reality of Australia being competitive on a global stage. As great as this country is and I’m very appreciative to be living here, it’s not competitive today on a global stage for a freight network business. So that’s what I think it’s about to be honest. And about how we and you all contribute to that and where it goes from here is really up to us. That’s why this conference is such a great thing and I support
continuing this conference into the future where we can all contribute and work together. Step up to the challenge. A challenge, I suggest that we all grab onto and work together to create a new reality.

One that results in us looking back in 30 years and saying “Wow. We did that. We created something better than what anyone thought possible at the time”.

Isn’t that what an enabler does? It allows something to happen that we’re not presently thinking about today.

So that’s what I think this is really maybe all about and this conference has been so important to look at the logistics across the supply chain here today. I just want to say thank you to everyone for being involved and also commit to everyone that I’m all in - and I hope you are too.

Thank you very much.

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