Transport and Ports

Department of Transport Planning and Local Infrastructure

Level 17

1 Spring Street

Melbourne 3000

Attention: Bernie Cahir

By email: Bernie.cahir@dtpli.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Cahir

**Committee for Geelong (CfG) Submission to the Murray Basin Region Freight Demand and Infrastructure Study**

CfG welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to Murray Basin Region Freight Demand and Infrastructure Study (the Murray Basin Study).

The Committee for Geelong is an independent, member-based organisation that advocates for the best overall long-term outcomes for Geelong. Our members represent the political spectrum and a breadth of industry both by sector and size. We work with members, leaders, stakeholders and governments to provide strategic leadership and influence to leverage the economic potential of the region to make Geelong a world-class place.

This submission to the Murray Basin Study is Public.

CfG Supports the broad recommendation of the Murray Basin Study that rail infrastructure serving the Murray Basin is:

* Converted to allow the operation of standard gauge rolling stock; and
* Upgraded to 21 tonne axle load (TAL).

The conversion and upgrading of these rail will improve the capacity, reliability and productivity of freight and logistics chains throughout Western Victoria and will allow further integration of these supply chains into broader Australian supply chains, in turn contributing to both state and national economic growth.

While CFG supports the project, our members have some concerns including:

* The need for strong and ongoing stakeholder involvement in the project, and in particular involvement from those who will be the immediate users of the infrastructure;
* The need for further consultation and planning on operational and broader commercial issues (including the identity of the track infrastructure operator and the impact on remaining broad gauge infrastructure in the region);
* The need to consider the broader supply chain perspective. For example the potential for increased rail traffic may require complementary expansions to existing standard gauge rail lines and port facilities;
* The need for broader transport policy settings, such as heavy vehicle and road pricing frameworks, to be consistent with the aims of the project.

Given the move to standard gauge, CfG would like to see clarification of the commercial and operational impact of the move to standard gauge on adjoining broad gauge lines.

There are several services relating to Geelong that transport goods to or from the Murray Basin to other areas of Victoria using the broad gauge network, for example; approximately 15,000 to 20,000 tonnes per annum of cement transported from Waurn Ponds to Mildura.

The project should consider these and the other services, and consider whether gauge transfer (or other solutions) need to be built into the project to allow these services to continue.

**CfG’S Position on Options raised in the Murray Basin Study**

Of the four options put forward in the Murray Basin Study (see Murray Basin Study page iii) CfG favours Option 3.

The differences between the forecast cost of Option 3 vs Option 4 are minimal (the difference is $3 million). CfG would least support Option 4 as it increases the distance to the Port of Geelong by about 130 Kilometres, impacting on cycle times and consequently increasing operating costs, thus limiting the commercial benefits that arise from the project.

Overall CfG supports the Murray Basin rail project, and recognises that it will contribute to both state and national economic growth.

Thank you for including CfG in your consultation process.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Casson

**Chief Executive Officer**