

ABC – Rural Report, Angus Verley Vince Cordoma MD of LRT.VCT Refrigerated Transport re MBRP 7.5.2026

Audio file transcript

00:00:00 Angus Verley ABC Radio

On the rural report and a major refrigerated transport business says governments are missing long-term vision in failing to deliver major rail freight projects.

In Victoria, the Murray Basin rail project sits unfinished, eight years after its scheduled completion date.

And along the east coast, the federal government has just scrapped the inland rail project.

Vince Cordoma, Managing Director at VCT Refrigerated Transport, based in Sunraysia, says his business is entirely reliant on trucks because rail services are either too inefficient or non-existent.

00:00:40 Vince Cordoma

We rely on roads and the truck network, but we would like rail as well.

00:00:47 Angus Verley ABC Radio

Right, so but why don't you use the rail services that are available?

00:00:52 Vince Cordoma

Sometimes we've made cut-offs with the ships that rail only goes 3 times a week, so we get 9 out of 10 times where we're doing demanding work, which we'll pick up an empty container this morning, load it this afternoon, and meet tonight's cut-off.

00:01:09 Angus Verley ABC Radio

Okay, so that is the case, I understand, with the Mildura line down to the ports that because it is such a long trip with the detour around Ballarat that there are only three services a week, so that just doesn't work logistically for you.

00:01:24 Vince Cordoma

No, it doesn't work viably with us at the moment. Not with the way our export demand is.

00:01:30 Angus Verley ABC Radio

And Ouyen Inc., the advocacy group behind getting that line fully standardised, it says that if that happened, then there could be 5 services a week. Would that make more sense for your business then?

00:01:42 Vince Cordoma

Oh, 100%, that'll work in pretty well, definitely well. Especially with rail there, it goes straight into the port, which is ideally. And that's where I support a lot of the rail.

If it's picked up from one place going direct to the end port, well, that's good, because it's taken a lot of the heavy stuff off the road.

00:02:00 Angus Verley ABC Radio

And when your trucks are driving down the highway with the railway line next to them, what do you think about that?

00:02:09 Vince Cordoma

I do shake my head. It's just, we're actually going backwards.

I believe we've gone backwards with our logistics in this country, in many areas.

We should be utilising rail a lot more because the driving infrastructure is not growing, if you know what I mean.

Like the workforce of the drivers aren't growing. So, in 10 years time, even in the next five years, it's going to be a struggle. We need to get good labour, reliable labour to drive these trucks.

00:02:36 Angus Verley ABC Radio

Why do you think that there are all of these railway lines that either haven't been standardised or have been decommissioned?

00:02:44 Vince Cordoma

Yeah, as I said, I don't think that they sit down and think of the logistics. It feels like that they just think of the logistics of today. They're not thinking in the next 10, 15 to 20 years and making it happen.

00:02:57 Angus Verley ABC Radio

Do you think governments have an appreciation of the significance of Sunraysia as a food bowl and just the sheer amount of produce that comes out of that region?

00:03:06 Vince Cordoma

I don't think the government actually realises how big our food bowl is out of our region. Yeah, it's massive and it's growing. It is growing.

00:03:14 Angus Verley ABC Radio

And if there was an efficient rail service to port from Sunraysia, what would it mean for your business both, I suppose, logistically and financially?

00:03:24 Vince Cordoma

Well, financially it would... would make a real difference in that way there, but logistically, you're going to be servicing your shipping line a lot more quicker, a lot more easier, and you're taking a lot more pressure off the road.

00:03:38 Angus Verley ABC Radio

And when you've got a large volume of produce that needs to get down to those ships and those ships don't wait for you, is it just a case of sending a convoy of trucks down?

00:03:48 Vince Cordoma

If it works out that way, or the poor customer and the exporter, they've got to wait for the next ship to be reloaded to meet that vessel there.

00:03:56 Angus Verley ABC Radio

And how would that change if instead it was all of those containers instead of being on a whole bunch of trucks if they were instead on a train?

00:04:04 Vince Cordoma

It would make it a lot more efficient and we can easily load all your containers on a train that goes straight to the wharf and it won't congest the roads or congest your port areas like your Footscray and your VICT around that area there, especially if it's all on rail.

00:04:23 Angus Verley ABC Radio

We have just heard in the past couple of days that the federal government is walking away from the inland rail that would have run all the way from Melbourne to Brisbane.

They've essentially said it would just be too expensive. Are you worried that governments with the state of their finances won't be investing more in rail in the future?

00:04:43 Vince Cordoma

That is a bit of a concern, because our country's big enough that where they should be railing a lot more to cover the long journeys.

00:04:51 Angus Verley ABC Radio

That was Vince Cordoma, Managing Director at VCT Refrigerated Transport.