

INFORMATION SHEET # B02

FAILURE OF GOVT TO ACT ON ITS OWN UNDERTAKING TO PARLIAMENT



Governments failure to act on its own undertaking to Parliament to resolve the December 2017 MBRP removal of rail sidings, without consultation, at Ouyen

PARLIAMENT - ADJOURNMENT MATTER DATED 8TH FEBRUARY 2018

GOVERNMENT HAS NOT DONE WHAT IT SAID IT WOULD DO. IT MUST BE RESOLVED AS PART OF THE COMPLETION OF THE MURRAY BASIN RAIL PROJECT

Question Status: Answered

Session:	58 Parliament First Session	Sitting:	2018	House:	LA
Asked By:	Crisp Peter	Party:	Nationals	Addressed To:	Public Transport
Asked Date:	08/02/2018				

Question :

ADJOURNMENT MATTER — Mr Crisp to **ask the Minister for Public Transport** —

I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. **The action I seek is for her to commit to providing a container siding at the Ouyen railyards.** The history of this is that Ouyen was a major rail junction and major rail town in the past, and there were six sidings in the Ouyen rail yards. **As part of the Murray Basin rail project, that was reduced to four sidings.** Because of the long lead times of the project, the consultation occurred some years ago about the siding needs, which have in fact now changed with the changes that have occurred within the 50 or more kilometres of the Ouyen yards. There has been correspondence with the minister about this particular issue, **in particular to request that the minister not remove one of the two sidings that were scheduled for removal.** That removal has now occurred.

It is also interesting to note that **Ouyen Inc., which is the representative for the Ouyen community in this matter,** has also written to Darren Chester, the federal member for Gippsland, who suggested that there ought to be discussions with V/Line and the other partners of the Murray Basin rail project. **So certainly I want to pay tribute to the work done in this area by Ouyen Inc. and Michael O'Callaghan, who have been working with the community to promote this.**

Now that the sidings have been removed, those involved want to get the minister to facilitate enhancing one of the remaining sidings for container loading. The opportunity for container traffic, which has changed in recent years, is grain. Grain marketing has become less centralised, and there are **now large operations containerising grain.** There are a couple of operators in the Ouyen area that have expressed interest in this.

The almond industry is going very well. It is considerable in its exports. There is a very large almond orchard that is planning a hulling and shelling plant that will be closer to Ouyen than to Mildura, so it could well load its export almonds there. And of course there are some mineral sands left in the area, which often go overseas for processing, and that has been known to happen at Ouyen. Also table grapes in Robinvale is very much a growing industry.

What they are asking for is something that can hold up to 12 80-foot wagons on a siding. They have identified the east side as being preferable. They really think that now would be an ideal time to undertake this work while the Murray Basin rail project is active in the area and the contractors are available. **This would be a minor but valuable addition to that project, which would move our product overseas via our ports as effectively and economically as possible.**

Answer:

See *Hansard* 8 February 2018 for Minister's response.

MS ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (17:32:48) — I thank the member for Mildura for raising in the adjournment tonight the matter of increased infrastructure around the Ouyen rail yards, and I do acknowledge that the member for Mildura has also written to me on this matter. I do understand the reason why he is very **keen to capitalise on the Murray Basin rail freight project**. It is a great project, a project that is being delivered by this Labor government, being further investment in upgrading the rail freight network across regional Victoria.

Of course it is only Labor governments that invest in the rail freight network across regional Victoria. For those of us with longer memories, we had to of course buy it back when we were last in government after the failed privatisation of the rail freight network by the former Kennett Liberal-National government, which brought the network to its knees actually — for the member for Mordialloc's benefit. The network was in significant decline. We brought it back in, pumped in investment and got Tim Fischer on board to undertake a review. We saw the upgrade of a number of lines under our previous government, and **now it is this Labor government that is also supporting and delivering the Murray Basin rail freight project**.

Of course this is a great project, and the member for Mildura **mentioned the almond industry and the table grape industry** in his local area in particular. **These are two good examples of why we need this project. We need this project so we can support our primary producers to get their product to market more quickly and more efficiently.** Upgrading the lines to standard gauge and increasing the axle loading mean we can deliver those outcomes. We can deliver those outcomes where product gets to port. Whether it is the port of Melbourne, the port of Geelong or the port of Portland, it can get there more quickly and efficiently. We know in this game, in this industry, time is money, and this **will provide significant efficiencies and returns for our primary producers** and in turn also give them the opportunity to make increased investments in their local areas like that in the almond industry which the member referred to.

Also this is a project that is going to take 20 000 trucks off local roads. That is also a great outcome for local government; many of those roads are their responsibility.

It is a terrific project, and I was very pleased to be standing in Avoca just at the start of last week celebrating the opening and the return of freight trains to the Maryborough to Ararat line. As part of this project this line has been reopened, bringing back freight trains for the first time on that line in nearly 20 years.

The member for Mildura wants to **see the capitalisation on this investment. That is absolutely the aim of this project, and that is what the Andrews Labor government wants to see in terms of the economic development opportunities that come from this project.** V/Line, as the project manager for this project as well as having responsibility for the line, is meeting next week, I understand — sorry; I should have said in coming weeks — with Ouyen Inc. regarding these issues. **We will continue to work with Ouyen Inc. and other stakeholders, including the freight industry, in this local area so we can capitalise on the benefits that we know that the Murray Basin rail freight project will deliver for communities like Ouyen, communities across the western part of Victoria.**

The remaining nine members raised matters for various ministers for their attention, and they will be referred for their action and response.

The SPEAKER — The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.37 p.m. until Tuesday, 20 February.

Government has not continued to work with Ouyen Inc. and other stakeholders. The DoT held a stakeholder meeting at Ouyen in March 2018 that was a resounding success; it clearly demonstrated the need for an intermodal at Ouyen. Despite this, Government has done nothing since.

Ouyen Inc has completed everything asked of it by the DoT, plus a significant amount more