OUYEN Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE - OUYEN INC

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Call for $235 million Murray Basin Rail commitment to complement $5 billion for roads

Ouyen Inc has welcomed the Victorian Liberals and Nationals' commitment to give regional Victoria a fair share of infrastructure investment and to invest $5 billion to repair and rebuild the state's roads.

However, Deane Munro of Ouyen Inc said **"If we are serious about fixing regional roads, we need to address the underlying problem; the amount of heavy freight being carried by road.** The best and logical way to address that is to get more on rail. **Roads and rail need to work together as part of an integrated freight network."**

Mr Munro said, "We are asking the Coalition to also commit $235 million towards specific works across the Murray Basin Freight Rail Network. To put it into context, **it is less than the average cost of each of Melbourne's second stage level crossing removals and represents less than 5 per cent of the Coalition's $5 billion commitment to roads."**

Mr Munro said most of the proposed rail works form part of the **National Land Transport Network**, creating the potential to **leverage a further $235 million from the Commonwealth and deliver a combined $470 million investment.**

The proposed works are:

$208 million*	Convert Manangatang and Sea Lake lines to standard gauge including replacement of non-gauge convertible sleepers
$ 27 million*	Extend 8 passing loops on the Mildura line to suit 1.2+ km long trains
$188 million^	Ballarat Passenger - Freight separation, Macarthur St. Ballarat level crossing removal, standardise Maryborough to Gheringhap, replace non-gauge convertible sleepers, extend 3 passing loops & reopening 1 other and works for introduction of a Maryborough - Geelong standard gauge passenger train service
$ 47 million #	build Sunraysia Mallee Port Link and upgrade access infrastructure

(source: *Murray Basin Rail Mark II and the Murray Basin Rail, *Which Path to 2035? report plus allowance for cost increases. ^PBO Costing plus additional costs & cost increases # GHD Advisory business case April 2021 plus allowance for cost increases.)*

Mr Munro said the Murray Basin Freight Rail Network's freight catchment straddles **13 municipalities, in part or whole, across northwest Victoria, southwest New South Wales and northeast South Australia.**

"The catchment includes Mildura Rural City Council, the nation's highest agricultural earning local government area, where more than 80 per cent of all exports currently go to port by road,"

Mr Munro said **the Sunraysia Mallee Port Link** represented a particularly strong component of the $470 million combined State and Commonwealth investment proposition**. The cost of building it is 10 per cent of the investment, yet it is expected to deliver more than 35 per cent of the benefits."**

"Those benefits include getting more freight off our roads and onto rail, improving freight **productivity** and rail **resilience**, reducing **emissions**, creating opportunities for new **manufacturing and regional jobs**, incentivising mineral sand and rare earth **mining**, and ultimately **improving farm gate returns**."

He said the nations peak rail industry group, Australasian Railway Association and the Freight on Rail Group, joint 2024 Victorian Freight Policy submission, identified **Murray Basin Rail Mark II and the Sunraysia Mallee Port Link as critical infrastructure gap projects for Victoria.**

Mr Munro said Ouyen Inc was seeking a clear election commitment.

"We support the Coalition's $5 billion roads policy"

"But for every $1 they have committed to fixing regional roads, we are asking for an additional 4.7 cents to get heavy freight off those roads by standardising the remainder of the Murray Basin Rail Network and building Sunraysia Mallee Port Link"

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