



OUYEN Inc.

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## **Absolute game changer for Northwest & Central Victoria rail**

The Parliamentary Budgets Office (PBO) released its costings on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> of this month, for the Ouyen Inc.'s 'Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan', a plan that overcomes the two reasons cited by the Victorian Government for not completing the Murray Basin Rail Project in full.

Scott Anderson of the volunteer, nfp group, Ouyen Inc. said "the PBO figure of \$115.1 million to fix the critical Ballarat rail corridor (Maryborough to Gheringhap) is an absolute game changer". And not only for our Sunraysia Mallee Port Link intermodal project and the grain trains in the Northwest, but for the current and future rail requirements in the vicinity of Bendigo and Ballarat as well"

Ouyen Inc. consultant, Michael O'Callaghan, said the 'Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan' was submitted to Government by Ouyen Inc. along with a long list of stakeholders as co-signatories, ranging from VFF to the Port of Portland. He said the plan was formulated in response to Government's decision to halve the scope of the Murray Basin Rail Project in 2020. "That decision triggered a whole raft of serious repercussions, including the need for 99 million truck kilometres over the next four years. So, we set about resolving the two key reasons cited by Government for not finishing the project" he said.

The 'Ouyen Inc. Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan' outlines how a freight train can travel through the 'passenger – freight train overlap section' in under 5 minutes at 40km/hr and not disrupt passenger trains. It also shows that the dual gauging from Gheringhap through to Ballarat is not warranted and this is now backed up by independent analysis undertaken in July this year. That analysis found that although the Public Transport Victoria's (PTV) preference is to have the Gheringhap (Nth Geelong) to Ballarat section dual gauged, to allow VLocity broad gauge passenger trains to traverse to and from Ballarat for maintenance, there is ample capacity on the existing broad gauge Bacchus Marsh line for them to do this. "Converting the 132 km from Gheringhap through to Maryborough to standard gauge, instead of dual gauging, brings down the cost significantly", Michael said.

Scott Anderson said he would like to thank the Member for Mildura, Ali Cupper, for submitting the 'Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan' to the Parliamentary Budgets Office for Election Policy Costing. "It demonstrates her direct support for the Sunraysia Mallee Port Link (SMPL) project and all of its many stakeholders, including the road transport industry". The aim of the project is to;

- get half to two thirds of the 800,000 tonnes of intermodal freight (shipping containers) in our catchment region onto rail, including almonds, table grapes, grain, citrus, wine, tartaric products and vegetables.
- implement value adding projects including a hay export facility
- support future mining of mineral sands & rare earths. Iluka Resources' letter of support states it will change the economics of mining the many proven strands in the region. In the last twelve months there has been a plethora of mining exploration applications close to the Sunraysia Mallee Port Link.

Scott said, "the Parliamentary Budgets Office's figure of \$115.1 million to reinstate the critical Ballarat freight rail corridor equates to about half the cost of a metro rail crossing removal". "It certainly paves the way to resolve a long list of opportunities that have been left on the table as well as present new ones, particularly in Central Victoria" he said.

**The 'Ouyen Inc. Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan' plan and the costing by the Parliamentary Budgets Office is a major step in overcoming the following repercussions of the 2020 Revised Murray Basin Rail Project**

Trains on half of the rail network are being permanently detoured an extra 130 km via the Grampians to get to port. It has made things as inefficient as say, detouring all vehicles between Bendigo and Melbourne to travel via Shepparton.

Trains on the other half are stuck on broad gauge which is not used for freight by any other Australian State or Territory, making it unsustainable

Now having two rail gauges requires two lots of equipment, making rail expensive and road transport a more viable option

Some of the repercussions include;

- 99 million truck kilometres will be required over the next four years due to the Murray Basin Rail project not being completed in full and on time. (independently verified)
- for the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) LGA, the Ag Capital of Australia, the weighted average distance for grain on rail to the nearest port (Geelong) is now 73% further than the nearest port by road (Adelaide). There are concerns that some rail services will shut down.
- 80% of the 1 million tonnes of intermodal freight (export in shipping container) will continue to go to port by road from the MRCC LGA and Sunraysia regions. Only reinstating the Ballarat rail freight corridor will enable the Sunraysia Mallee Port Link to proceed and get half to two thirds of this intermodal freight onto rail,
- the Birchip Grainflow site, in the Shire of Buloke, have a significant grain accumulation and train loading facility, was initially built on the premise of achieving the highly efficient 24 hour train cycle to Geelong via Ballarat. But that will no longer be achievable because of the much longer distance.
- The Ballarat intermodal may not proceed because it is stranded on broad gauge, making it unsustainable and cannot access the standard gauge interstate in Inland rail lines.
- Unfortunately, one rail operator is now faced with potentially withdrawing its services, simply because they are losing money whilst the line stays on broad gauge.
- Intermodal freight not going on rail, requires the produce to be trucked to the western suburbs for storing and packing into shipping containers before being trucked to port and / or for the trucks to go to the western suburbs to collect empty containers (in nearly all instances).

**Extract from the Parliamentary Budgets Office's election policy costing in relation to Ouyen Inc.'s Reinstatement of the Ballarat rail freight corridor plan** (submitted by Ali Cupper, Member for Mildura),

This policy would:

- convert 68 km of track between Maryborough and Ballarat North Junction from broad to standard gauge
- convert west of Lydiard Street to Gheringhap (via Ballarat Station and Humffray Street) from broad to standard gauge track
- convert Ballarat North Junction to west of Doveton Street from broad to standard gauge track and link to the Maryborough line
- recommission 550 m of existing broad gauge track from west of Doveton Street to Ballarat North Junction and link to the Wendouree line
- convert 350 m of single line from west Doveton Street to east Armstrong Street from broad to dual gauge track
- convert west Lydiard Street to Ballarat Station (platforms 1 and 2) from broad to dual gauge track
- remove the Macarthur Street level crossing