

Media statement

Surat Basin Rail on track for freight and coal

25 August 2008

In a major boost for regional Queensland, the alignment for the proposed Surat Basin Rail has been selected to cater for both freight and coal traffic.

Surat Basin Rail CEO Graham Dooley announced today that the 210-kilometre railway linking the coal-rich Surat Basin and the port of Gladstone would be an open access coal and freight line and not confined solely to coal.

“In July, the Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture made the significant commitment to adopt a preferred alignment for the proposed railway that will be also suitable for general freight, such as agricultural produce,” Mr Dooley said.

“Coal will still be our number one customer however other types of freight will be welcome to use the railway,” he said.

“We will not undertake any further studies on a narrow gauge alignment dedicated only to coal. Instead, our project team will progress the combined coal and freight alignment, with the potential at some time in the future for a dual gauge track to accommodate interstate trains, subject to Government requests.

“The railway will be designed for use initially by diesel trains, with provision made for electric trains in the future.”

Mr Dooley said the development of the Surat Basin Rail would be a major windfall for Queensland’s economy and its leading export industry, coal.

“By linking the existing western railway system at Wandoan and the port of Gladstone, the Surat Basin Rail would enable about four billion tonnes of untapped coal in the Surat Basin to become a viable economic resource for the state,” he said.

“Coal is Queensland’s single most important mineral export commodity, worth more than \$20 billion a year.

“For the first time, local communities such as Wandoan, Chinchilla and Miles also would have an efficient link to the port of Gladstone for domestic and export sales of their freight.”

The preferred Surat Basin Rail alignment runs broadly from Wandoan to Banana in a largely north-south direction, following major roads and property boundaries where possible to avoid impacts to landowners.

The alignment was selected following technical investigations and extensive consultation with local communities, industry, government and special interest groups since 2007.

Mr Dooley said the project team would continue to consult with stakeholders about the environmental, social and economic impacts of the Surat Basin Rail as part of a detailed and thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

“The EIS will be released publicly for stakeholder feedback later this year,” he said.

“In the meantime, the second project newsletter will be distributed this week to local communities in the project area to provide an update on the railway’s alignment and EIS process.”

“We value the feedback and local knowledge stakeholders have shared with us already in progressing the railway’s development. We will continue to involve the communities who will benefit most from this project throughout the planning process.”

The Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture is working in close partnership with the Queensland Government to bring the railway’s development to financial close by the end of 2009 with commencement of operations in 2012.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the second project newsletter, call 1800 112 143 or visit www.suratbasinrail.com.au.

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