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To Whom It May Concern,

SUBMISSION TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE AUSTRALIA PRIORITY LIST

Introduction

Regional Development Australia Barwon South West (RDA BSW) is responding to the 2020 Infrastructure Australia Priority List submission process to highlight and support our region's nationally significant infrastructure assets.

The Barwon South West (BSW) contribution to the national economy is supported by a significant transport network, and infrastructure that includes Port of Geelong and Port of Portland, Avalon International Airport, Princes Highway transport corridor, passenger and freight rail infrastructure and the Great Ocean Road.

These assets are key industry enablers and are critical to support the region's continued growth and its role in the national economy.

Recommendation

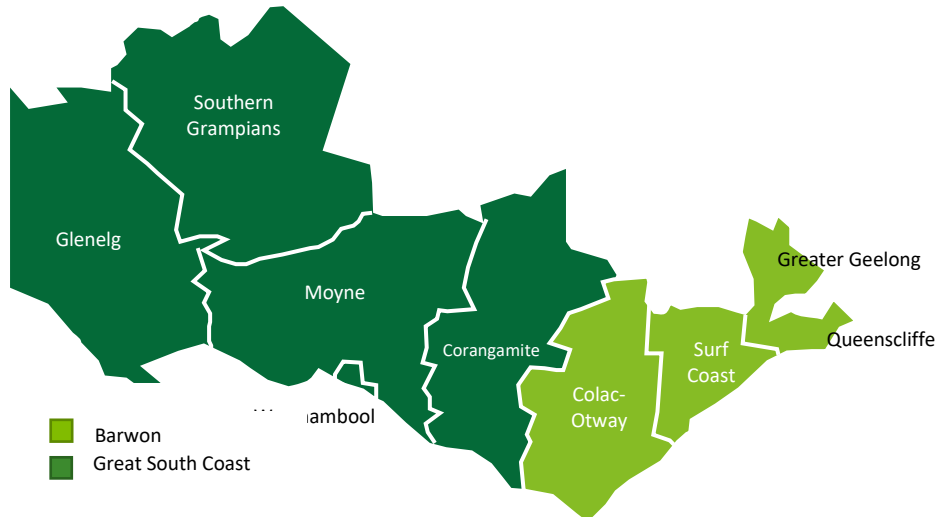
RDA BSW would like Infrastructure Australia to note:

1. The following nationally significant infrastructure assets and initiatives in the BSW region;
2. That RDA BSW supports any submissions to Infrastructure Australia from proponents that have jurisdiction for delivery of initiatives that support these significant assets; and
3. That RDA BSW will work with proponents to who have responsibility for delivery of the infrastructure priorities to develop a nationally significant infrastructure pipeline for the region, that highlights interdependencies, aligns with state delivery strategies, and can inform future public and private investment.



Regional context

The BSW region is made up of the area from Queenscliff to the South Australian border, encompassing the entire Great Ocean Road region and has a residential population of 412,642 people (2018). The region abuts the nation's largest population growth corridor (west of Melbourne), and includes two state regions (Barwon and Great South Coast), and nine local government areas, as shown below:



The main industries are manufacturing, retail trade, health care, construction, education and training, agriculture, forestry, fishing and tourism. Manufacturing, health and retail trade are currently the largest employing industries, although the economy has significant opportunities for growth in new energy, advanced manufacturing and food security industries.

Environmentally, the BSW enjoys higher than average rainfall and wind, providing ongoing competitive strengths in agriculture, food, renewable and clean energy production.

Response

Investment in enabling infrastructure is required to strengthen the region's connectivity and is essential in a competitive environment for industries to unlock their growth potential.

- 1. Access to a strong digital network** is critical to ensuring economic growth in the BSW region. Recent analysis of digital supply and demand done at a place and sectoral basis across the region indicates there remains a significant portion of our region with inadequate digital connectivity and infrastructure. Significant digital divide exists between western parts of the region and metropolitan areas.

Inadequate mobile coverage and the availability of adequate, affordable business-grade service for regional business across all NBN technology types is lacking, despite the introduction of NBN's Enterprise Ethernet business service. RDA BSW calls on Infrastructure Australia to prioritise actions that can address underserved regional business precincts with high-capacity business-grade broadband services and addresses areas of inadequate mobile coverage.

- 2. Princes Highway west of Colac (PHWC)** is the major freight and transport corridor for the BSW region and its \$3.9 billion agricultural sector. The Princes Highway is the major freight transport link between Melbourne and the South Australian border and on to Adelaide, connecting communities and industry in Victoria's ports, rail, airports and major and capital cities.

Growth in the value of the region's agriculture, forestry and tourism sectors and increased traffic and freight volumes mean it is critical that PHWC be given priority for investment in the Princes Highway Corridor Strategy to support the forecast growth of important national industries and ensure a continued and significant contribution to the national economy.

3. **Geelong – Melbourne Fast Rail** is a priority for all levels of government. Geelong is Victoria’s second largest city and the second fastest growing major city in Australia. The Victorian Government is investing in detailed planning work and technical investigations to determine a preferred option for fast rail between Melbourne and Geelong. The preferred option will maximize benefits of a future Melbourne Airport Rail Link by integrating it with the existing network. The fast rail will reduce travelling times, facilitating decentralisation of Melbourne and easing of road congestion on the Princes Highway.
4. **Avalon Airport to Melbourne Rail Link** is a critical next step to maximise the airport’s anticipated growth and investment opportunities. The project will build a new train station on the existing line known as Avalon and will link the airport to the Geelong / Melbourne rail line. A site has been identified and lines up with the gazetted rail reservation servicing the airport, this link is also being investigated in the Geelong Melbourne Fast Rail planning.
5. **Port of Geelong** is the largest bulk cargo port in Victoria. The Port of Geelong manages approximately 25 per cent of Victoria’s total trade – including 50 per cent of the state’s fuel supply, with more than 600 vessel visits a year generating \$7 billion for the economy and 1,400 jobs.

Port of Geelong expects significant growth during the next 15 years, further strengthening the Port’s economic importance to the national economy. Strengthening critical road, rail and channel links and protecting the availability of suitable adjoining land for port activities and related industries are essential to the port’s growth.

6. **Port of Portland** is Victoria’s only naturally deep-water port, providing a logistics gateway to the rest of Australia and the world, with connectivity to national road and rail networks. Strategically located on the south west coast between Melbourne and Adelaide, it provides a gateway to international markets in Asia as well as other Australian regions. The port specialises in bulk commodities, particularly agricultural, forestry and mining products. It handles 45% of Victoria’s dry bulk cargo, approximately 7.5 million tonnes of cargo (5 million tonnes of forest products), 300 ships per annum, and 150,000 truck movements annually and generates 400 jobs.

The port requires major infrastructure upgrades to turn it into a modern export facility, to ensure its competitiveness and to support its continued contribution to the national economy.

7. **The Great Ocean Road** attracts more than 6 million visitors each year, rising to more than 8 million visitors in the next decade and is an internationally recognised part of the Australian tourism brand. The Australian and Victorian Governments are jointly investing \$108.15 million to deliver priority projects along the iconic Twelve Apostles Coast (identified in the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan), and there is an additional investment from the Australian Government of \$27.5 million for a range of other visitor economy projects along the Great Ocean Road.

In recent years there have been matched funding agreements between Australian and Victorian governments for road maintenance and upgrades, the most recent being \$50 million in joint funding for upgrades and repairs until 2022. RDA BSW is calling on both governments to extend this commitment and form an ongoing partnership with long-term funding to ensure the road infrastructure has the capacity to support this planned and much needed visitor infrastructure investment. Additionally, there remains a call for inclusion of the Great Ocean Road in the National Land Transport Network.

8. **The Maroona to Portland Rail Line** is part of the Australian Rail Track Corporation Network, linking the Western half of Victoria to the National Grid and the Port of Portland, creating a pathway to export from some of Australia’s most productive farmland and mining commodities.

The Maroona to Portland line is currently 19-ton axle loading (TAL), and as outlined in the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBPL) Business Case and the Victoria Rail Alliance Policy Statement Document 2019, needs to be upgraded to a minimum 21-tonne axle load (TAL) in line with the rest of the MBPL network. This upgrade will allow competition between ports, increase freight capacity and

competition between rail operators, decreasing truck movements on major road networks as well as creating efficiency in the supply chain.

9. **Warrnambool – Melbourne Passenger Rail** is an important transport link that services the population of more than 100,000 people as well as the visitors to the region. Due to aged infrastructure, the service does not meet punctuality targets. While the State Government’s Regional Rail Revival package is providing \$114 million investment into revitalisation of the line, further investment is required to enable increased frequency and achieve Warrnambool-Melbourne in 3 hours.
10. **The Queenscliff-Sorrento Ferry** is an important transport infrastructure connecting the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas across Port Phillip Bay. Carrying more than 950,000 people and 260,000 vehicles per year, it is the busiest car and passenger ferry service in Australia.

Commonwealth investment has been committed through the Geelong City Deal to develop and upgrade the terminal at Queenscliff and provide world-class infrastructure that will grow the visitor economy. To realise the return on investment a further commitment is needed to undertake the necessary foreshore improvements, terminal and road upgrades on the Sorrento side. RDA BSW supports this project as a priority for the BSW region and recognises the contribution Seaward Ferries makes to the national visitor economy.

11. **The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is the first Australian site to be recognised exclusively for its Aboriginal cultural values on the UNESCO World Heritage List, making it one of 20 Australian sites on the list. This listing is supported by the Victorian and Australian governments, and the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners.

\$13 million has been invested by State Government to protect the area as Budj Bim develops into a world-class tourism destination. Enabling infrastructure in line with Budj Bim Master Plan and the region’s Aboriginal Tourism Development Plan will be needed to support and protect this international asset.


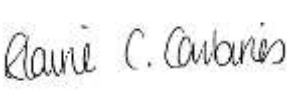

Conclusion

An efficient transport network and supporting enabling infrastructure creates competition in a global market by allowing cost effective and on time delivery, giving a global competitive edge to Australian exporters increasing international competitiveness and creating jobs and investment in the national economy.

The BSW Committee hopes to work with Infrastructure Australia and the proponents who have responsibility for delivery of the infrastructure priorities, to develop a nationally significant infrastructure pipeline for our region that highlights interdependencies, aligns with state delivery strategies, and can inform future public and private investment.

RDA BSW thanks Infrastructure Australia for the opportunity to make this submission in support of region’s nationally significant transport network and infrastructure assets. Please do not hesitate to contact the Committee via email rda.barwonsouthwest@rdv.vic.gov.au should you wish to discuss any of the infrastructure assets and or initiatives that are outlined above.

Yours sincerely

		
Bruce Anson Chair RDA Barwon South West	Elaine Carbines Committee Member RDA Barwon South West	Anita Rank Committee Member RDA Barwon South West