



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Media Release

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### Murrurundi Rail Tunnel/link edging closer

The major upgrade of the rail link between the north west of New South Wales and the Port of Newcastle through the Liverpool Range is edging closer according to the Member for New England, Tony Windsor after the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Anthony Albanese answered a question from him in the Parliament on the status of the project today.

Mr Windsor wanted to know how the project was progressing given that the funding was announced in December 2008 as part of the Government's initial stimulus package in response to the Global Financial Crisis.

Mr Windsor said that the Minister's answer indicates that while the project was taking some time to get down to the construction phase, it is definitely progressing and will be a great asset to both sides of the range.

"Minister Albanese indicated that the Australian Rail Track Corporation and industry were deliberating over the most beneficial route and whether a new tunnel or new route was more preferable and economic indicating that there should be a decision on this by the middle of the year.

"With \$290m coming from the Government and the rest from the ARTC and industry, it is understandable that they want to get it right for everyone's benefit.

"I will however be following up in the middle of the year as it is such a vital infrastructure link between the inland and the Port of Newcastle that pressure needs to be maintained on all the stakeholders to get on with its construction sooner rather than later and there are also individual landholders in the area who are also impacted on by any delay in the decision making process," Mr Windsor said.

**Mr Windsor's Question and Minister Albanese's answer follow over page:**

## **Mr Windsor's Question and Minister Albanese's answer**

**Mr WINDSOR** (2.55 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. The minister would recall announcing on 12 December 2008 an amount for \$290 million as part of the infrastructure stimulus package to go towards funding a new rail alignment through the Liverpool Range, on the boundary of the New England and Hunter electorates. Could the minister update the House on the spending of that stimulus money and the status of the project?

**Mr ALBANESE**—I thank the member for New England for his question. I do indeed recall being very proud that day as the government intervened to cushion the impact of the global financial crisis on the Australian economy and on jobs. Part of that was the \$1.2 billion that we injected into the Australian Rail Track Corporation—\$580 million of that was allocated to the Hunter region. Indeed, at least one of the loop lines that we announced on that day has already been completed.

With regard to the Liverpool Range, I am aware that the member for New England has a keen and legitimate interest in this issue. As I advised the House, the ARTC is undertaking this project in close consultation with industry. This is a very complex engineering exercise, and last week the ARTC and industry agreed to undertake further geotechnical investigations to narrow down the alignment options. Those options will be narrowed down to three from the existing six and then the ARTC will go to industry to ask them for their views as to which alignment should occur. That concept assessment report will go to industry by the middle of this year for consideration.

Industry, of course, has an important role to play in this. We fund the ARTC, but the ARTC receives funds from the access fees from private industry. Hence, they not only get the clear benefits but also have a role to play in financing. This will lead to a major increase in productivity once the alignment is chosen. In this regard, there is a fundamental issue of whether you tunnel or whether you go around some of the landscape there. Once those issues are resolved and after we go out to the market in the middle of 2010, construction work can commence. I thank the member for his question and I indicate to him, as he knows, that I will keep him fully informed of how this important project proceeds.