

We are based in Merbein 10km's west of Mildura in North-west Victoria we border N.S.W and S.A

Our Location is excellent for both domestic and international shipments with 75% of the nation's population within overnight transport, two international container ports in close proximity Melbourne and Adelaide

Bulk Port of Geelong/Portland/Adelaide available to bulk commodities.

Our region (Tri-State Hinterland) is abound with Fresh Fruit/Dried Fruit/Almonds & Nuts/Wine/Grain according to ABARE the Mallee is the largest food bowl in our nation

The strength of the region is Climate/Murray/Darling Rivers/Soils and the work ethic along with resilience of our growers. Locally the Mildura Rural city Council has approved over \$3.1b of solar arrays within the council boundaries.

The size of the Horticultural volumes are set to double in the next 7 years with major producers of Citrus/Grapes/Almonds on significant growth paths and marry that to the recent announcement

Of the Sunraysia Modernisation Project 2 that will leverage the existing SMP1 to make available a further 2,200 HA or irrigated land the only things to stop our growth are WATER and Currency

Our region is vibrant and growing and whatever assistance can be provided in relation to providing our exporters and domestic suppliers more efficient supply chains will only bolster the current growth and vibrancies and foster continued profitability

Some thoughts around critical supply chain efficiency opportunities

- The current Murray Basin Rail Project will deliver increased axle loadings to 21 TAL and standardise the Merbein/Manangatang/Sealake lines and add the Maryborough to Ararat and Murrayville to Ouyen lines in standard gauge. The next stage of this this development (that should follow immediately) is
 - To look at the existing passing loops and see that they are long enough and in the correct location
 - Full audit of Signalling there are significant deficiencies in the Ballarat and Geelong (C Box) signalling that needs upgrade to bring forward efficiencies
 - Join with the State who has the Regional Crossing initiative to look at crossing protection/removal along the Merbein corridor but extend to other regional freight lines there is more than 100 crossings between Maryborough and Merbein all that have TSR's (Temporary Speed restrictions of 50klmph) and they have been temporary since 2010
 - It's important that the section between Maryborough – Ballarat – Gheringhap (Geelong) is standardised and not dual gauge. This assists freight immensely but also provides the opportunity to open passenger rail to Melbourne Via Ballarat to Horsham and Ararat which don't currently have a rail service.

Undertaking these works will provide the opportunity to run trains to the port in 24hr cycle times and significantly increase efficiency and reduce cost to the grower

Waterfront

- Provide a mechanism to partner with the state to deliver ondock rail for regional exports
- Currently the cost of the last mile for exports accessing the port by rail are significant as a proportion of the total supply chain cost

- We have seen the Footscray market be removed to make way for the extended Port Prescient (5 yrs ago) the strategic leases in the waterfront that would allow ondock rail come up in 2020 and yet we cannot get momentum and focus on ondock rail the metro shuttles have taken the breath from regional export trains accessing the port and delivering benefits to regional exporters and their communities. The Griffith Train alone provides 10% of all the exports out of the Port Of Melbourne. Some focus on this from a federal level could be a game changer we have regional trains from Horsham/Warrnabool/Tocumwal/Traralgon/Merbein and we need your support for these regional locations.
- Dynon south offers opportunity for the port into the future when the WIFT/BIFT remove the interstate traffic from Dynon, there seems to be on real plan for this transition or the linkage to the inland rail

Rail West of Broken Hill

- Studies by GHD and State Governments have been undertaken to evaluate the feasibility of running a new line from Mildura to West of Broken Hill these were completed some 2-3yrs ago and concluded the need would arrive in 2025. The pressure building on the Melbourne – Adelaide line would be such gridlocking would occur from 2025 on and the relief valve would be the connection to Broken Hill and the trans-continental. There may be some relief provided by the inland rail and shuffling trains through Parks but I think distance would become an issue
- I think Government should investigate the report findings and reengage with stakeholders to look at feasibility/corridor protection-purchase/timing

Road connections from our great city are excellent but some more passing lanes and upgraded way-stops would be a desirable outcome

Air connections to Mildura are excellent and growing this opportunity for freighters direct from Mildura is always talked about but in essence a tax free exclusion zone around the airport would need to be established so value adding and distribution could be undertaken to encourage imported goods could be flown in direct and bear some of the cost to reduce the exporters cost on the way out, someone like Samsung/apple would be attractive high value imports that could be value added here for distribution to warehousing or retail.

I think after the 4Corners investigation 24/07/17 it shows Federal Government should invest in water infrastructure not have growers keep water on their land it should be held in the rivers, lakes and dams controlled by the Federal Government. Law enforcement has a critical part to play in ensuring the water is for all and not for the few that exploit their power.

Ken Wakefield
 Managing Director
 Wakefield Transport Group