

RE-ACTIVATING THE INGLEWOOD < > EAGLEHAWK RAIL FREIGHT LINK

FORTHCOMING GRAIN HARVEST

- The latest Victorian harvest forecast is equivalent to around 7.4 million tonnes, with a significant volume of this total being worth-while yields in the Mallee and upper Northern parts of the state. #
- **Revised forecasts for production of wheat and canola are even higher than predicted in February, 2020. #**
- The total winter crop is equivalent to around 9 loaded grain trains (of 40 wagons per train) operating each day across the full year.
- It can be expected that road carriage will account for some of this bumper harvest but the rail task potentially will be significantly higher (12 %) than the average harvest task over the last decade.

RAIL FREIGHT HANDLING OF THIS HARVEST

- The Victorian harvest in the Murray Basin is currently spread across two gauges - standard and broad gauge.
- Above rail resources in locomotives and wagons on standard gauge should be adequate. Broad gauge locomotives and wagons whilst largely captive to Victoria (in the medium term) potentially can be worked more efficiently if the Inglewood – Eaglehawk link is re-activated in maximizing fleet utilization through faster transit times to and from ports and faster turnaround of trains at regional terminals and ports.
- Below rail resources (in the V/Line freight network of tracks, signalling and loading facilities) should see a significant rise in utilization, particularly on those lines that project into the far Northern parts of the state (notably on the Mallee lines to Murrayville and Yelta (Mildura group), Sea Lake and Manangatang (Korong Vale group), Piangil; possibly Deniliquin, Tocumwal and Oaklands.
- Many of the longer freight lines (notably the broad gauge Korong Vale line group) currently have very limited capacity for train running, and particularly for running more than one train on each line at a time.
- **The Murray Basin rail network in its current partially standardized state has never faced the task of handling either an average or above average grain harvest. And in its current state is most unlikely to be able to handle much of the increased haulage task, without re-activation of the key cross country rail link between Inglewood and Eaglehawk.**

CURRENT RAIL INTERFACES AND CONSTRAINTS

- The Korong Vale group of broad gauge lines meets the Mildura group of standard gauge lines at Dunolly and for the next 22 km (approx. 35 mins running time) to Maryborough co-exist in a dual gauge track section – i.e. all trains of both gauges South of Dunolly share a single track dual gauge section from Dunolly to Maryborough.
- South of Maryborough standard gauge trains traverse a single track 109 km section via Ararat to Maroona, without any facility to pass opposing trains - a sectional running time of around 3 ½ hours.
- Standard gauge trains have a minor interface issue with passenger trains at Maryborough, and a somewhat more complex interface at Ararat with broad gauge passenger and Wimmera and Inter-state standard gauge trains.
- Broad gauge trains have no facilities to pass opposing broad gauge trains between Korong Vale and Warrenhiep (on the eastern side of Ballarat) – a distance of 169 km and running time of around 3h ¾ hours.
- Additionally broad gauge grain trains interface with twice daily Ballarat – Maryborough trains effectively reducing the available time for freight trains over the shared Ballarat – Maryborough single track section.
- Broad gauge grain trains also have a major interface issue getting through the frequent Melbourne - Wendouree passenger train movements between Ballarat North and Ballarat East.
- The combination of these multiple constraints is that currently the reliable capacity for broad gauge freight trains to/from the Korong Vale group of lines is **no more than 2** trains each way per day.

ABARES website Victorian grain harvest forecasts (June – 2020)

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/agricultural-outlook/australian-crop-report/victoria>

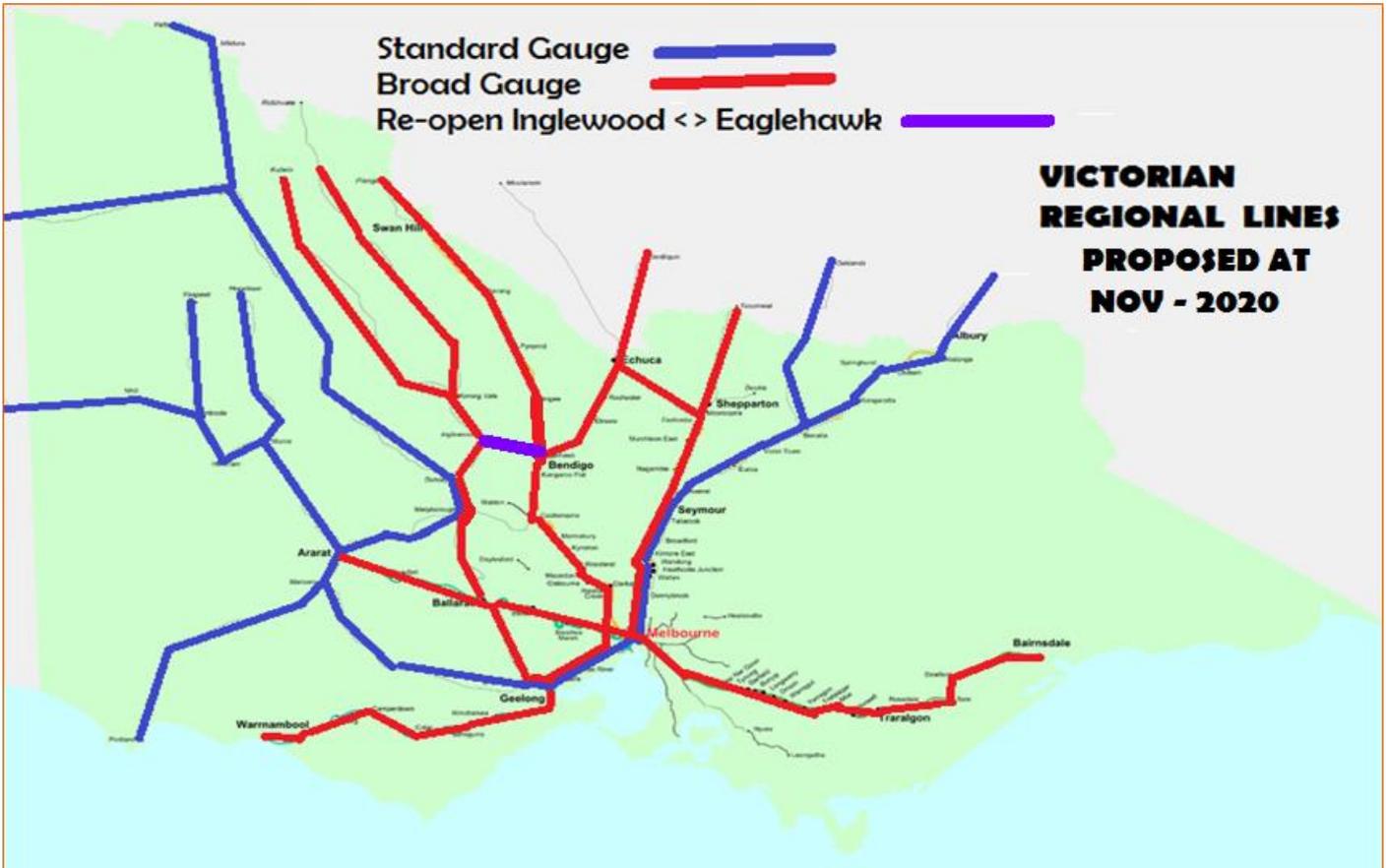
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- The dormant broad gauge line between Inglewood and Eaglehawk is 41 kms long.
- The broad gauge section inbound from Korong Vale would then be shortened to become Korong Vale to Bendigo Yard a section length of 81 km with a running time of around 1 ¾ hours.
- **The number of trains then able to be run on the broad gauge Korong Vale network would no longer be an issue as capacity would more than double on both lines, with the Inglewood < > Eaglehawk line re-activated.**
- Trains to/from Melbourne would have a significantly reduced running time, especially of benefit to the regular intermodal trains from Ultima; leading to shorter trip times and improved utilization of rollingstock.
- Trains to/from Geelong would have a longer journey in kilometres than via Ballarat, BUT would normally take no longer in time as a result of travelling on more double track sections between Kyneton – Sunshine and also between Newport – Geelong.
- The option would still exist to run broad gauge trains from the Korongvale group of lines via Maryborough to Geelong and Melbourne as operationally required, providing an element of redundancy and flexibility in the infrastructure for efficient operation of North Western broad gauge freight trains.
- **By offering an alternative route South for broad gauge grain trains, additional train paths will be freed up to allow extra standard gauge grain trains to be run from the Mildura group of lines South to ports.**
- The additional freight trains operating via Bendigo would primarily operate late evenings and overnight and therefore not affect the reliable operation of Bendigo, Swan Hill or Echuca passenger services.
- **Existing container export traffics from Bridgewater would potentially have direct rail access to the Port of Melbourne, simply by attachment at Bridgewater to the existing Ultima Intermodal train service.**

SUMMARY

1. With the existing state of rail infrastructure in the North West it is highly likely that any above average grain harvest (as predicted this year) will largely end up being carried by road due to the inability of the existing rail freight network configuration and infrastructure to be able to handle the record grain volumes offering.
2. **Each extra grain train that cannot be run potentially unleashes up to 90 heavy vehicles onto the road network from the point of loading all the way to the export port and back.**
3. This is not a desirable outcome in terms of accelerated deterioration of key regional roads, and not realizing the lower environmental emissions achievable by using rail for bulk haul long distance movements.
4. Re-activating the dormant 41 km Inglewood – Eaglehawk link, as fit for purpose freight operation at 40 - 50 km/h, would provide greater reliability of passenger train operations through Ballarat and Maryborough.
5. **At the same time, with less broad gauge freight trains operating via Dunolly there is a flow on benefit of releasing additional freight train paths for the Mildura group of standard gauge lines.**
6. Re-instating broad gauge freight operations between Inglewood and Eaglehawk would more than double the number of trains operable daily on both the Sea Lake and Manangatang broad gauge lines.
7. Bendigo Rail Workshops would have more direct access from the North Western areas of the State.
8. **Future opportunities opened up include potential extension of V/Line Melbourne – Eaglehawk passenger services to Marong, and establishment of a major intermodal freight terminal in the Bridgewater area.**

Rail Network Map – Attached file (PNG)



Attached photo files. (PNG format) 600 x 400 pixels taken as at June – 2020.



IMG 0863 Bridgewater Station Yard



IMG 0849 Dormant line between Eaglehawk and Marong at level crossing