In response to proposals put forward by GHD to improve the existing rail freight link between Melbourne, Perth and Darwin via Adelaide, we submit that:

Option 1, the upgrading of the existing Adelaide Hills line, would be like continuously patching up patches on an old coat – eventually it falls to pieces. Given the fact that the upgrade intends to allow for heavier and longer and double-stacked trains, we are dubious that any amount of money would solve the adverse impacts upon the hills community, especially as far as wheel squeal is concerned. (The ARTC's $0.5 million Rail Squad noise monitoring machine has achieved no reduction in noise after many years of monitoring). In fact, given that GHD has acknowledged an upgrade could not include straightening of curves or flattening of gradients, we submit that longer, heavier and double stacked trains will actually present a greater risk of derailment, and given that SA's population is expected to increase by 500,000 in the coming 10 years we submit that the disruption caused to traffic will actually increase.

GHD says on page 9 that 'Adelaide is expected to experience a gradual decline in its relative importance as a rail destination and origin point over the next 30 years' (p 9) whereas 'Perth's role as a rail freight origin and destination point is expected to grow at a faster rate than that of Adelaide...' which reinforces the notion of throwing good money after bad.

We believe that Option 1 should be discounted for the following reasons:

- the 'patching up' required by the Adelaide Hills line would be never-ending and would eventually require greater expense than Bypass Option 3.
- major and expensive disruption to both rail and roads during the upgrade.
- continuing to use the existing line will count out any future possibility of developing a decent commuter and tourism service extending as far as Mount Barker and other Hills towns that are developing rapidly.
- perpetuating a weak link in the Australian rail freight network encourages more transport of freight by trucks on the road in favour of rail.

Greater number of longer, heavier and higher trains means:

- an increase in noise levels.
- continuation of and increase in traffic hold-ups at level crossings – and what about emergency service vehicles such as fire engines or ambulances?
- continuation of and greater potential for vehicular accidents at level crossings.
- increased potential for bushfire in certain areas.
- increased potential danger of derailments in residential areas.
- more pollution in built-up areas, expensive for the rail freight industry and bad for the health of the community.
- Still no capability of travelling safely more than an average of 35 km ph, which is way behind the rest of Australia and the world in rail freight speeds.

Therefore we submit that Option 1 be discounted.

We believe that Option 3 should be adopted for many reasons such as it:

- would not cause disruption to trains on the Adelaide Hills line while being constructed.
- bypasses the Adelaide Hills line all the way to Islington, so can't compromise the line for future development.
- travels through 'currently sparsely populated country and poses relatively few social issues' (p 18) (i.e., noise, level crossing delays, derailments in built-up areas, pollution, bushfire risk)
- travels through terrain relatively flat with a line relatively straight, potentially allowing for decent train speeds and reducing the need for many locomotives to pull the trains, thus causing less pollution and being more economical for the industry.
- travels through terrain relatively flat, straight, and sparsely populated, reducing risk of a derailment in built-up areas.
- allows trains to be double-stacked and to increase length to 1800 metres long.
- saves about one hour's transit time for freight travelling direct between Melbourne and Perth/Darwin, so it will bring long term economic benefit to the rail freight industry and be an attractive alternative to trucking freight by road.

We question the $1.4billion budget estimate for Option 3, given that comparable track routes over similar terrain have been costed at between $1 and $3 million per kilometre of track, and also given that land acquisition costs would be relatively low given the (mostly arid) land through which the corridor would travel.

In conclusion, we submit that Option 3 be adopted and implemented as soon as possible.

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