



March 28, 2019

### **WSFR Media Release - Federal Government \$70M Funding Announcement**

Wednesday 27th March saw an announcement of the Federal Government's \$70 million commitment through the Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) initiative for the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Route (WSFR). The Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack joined representatives of the WSFR in Bindoon to mark the funding announcement. The Deputy PM, who is also the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, has been very receptive to what the project group is trying to achieve with the WSFR network. This will fund road improvements which will enhance productivity and driver safety across the Wheatbelt.

The WSFR encompasses 80 connecting routes with over 4,400km of roads across the Wheatbelt comprising 42 local governments, The WSFR Working Group has been working for the past three years to secure funding for a project of strategic importance for the agricultural and transport sectors. The announcement will bring together the 42 Wheatbelt shires and the Federal Government to identify and prioritise projects across this network in coming months.

These roads are local government managed roads, identified as 'secondary freight routes' and are essential for supporting key freight supply chains that support grain, mining, general freight and the tourism industry. This means they carry a significant and highly valued freight task but are not located on a state or federal road.

ROSI will deliver works such as road realignments, road sealing, strengthening and widening, flood immunity, pavement rehabilitation and bridge and culvert upgrades, creating a more reliable and safer road network and improve access for higher capacity vehicles. The road upgrades are part of the Australian Government's \$3.5 billion nationwide investment over the next decade through ROSI, to ensure the nation's key

freight roads efficiently connect agricultural and mining regions to ports, airports and other transport hubs.

Cr Ricky Storer, Chair of the WSFR Working Group, said the roads identified for upgrades were essentially the weakest link in the network. “They are no longer fit for purpose and restrict the size and type of vehicle that can be used to carry out the required transport task,” he said. “Further, the burden of managing these roads falls to local governments, and not necessarily in a fair or equitable way.

Cr Storer said the safety of road users was always the number one priority of the taskforce and today’s announcement would create a safer environment for all those travelling within the network. The WSFR group’s long-term goal is to secure funding support of approximately \$500 million for staged capital works over a 10 to 20-year time frame. It is a great example of collaboration amongst regional local governments who so far have provided in excess of \$750K in-kind contribution.

The WSFR would like to thank all federal and state members of parliament, 42 local governments, Main Roads WA, RDA Wheatbelt, Wheatbelt Development Commission and WALGA who have assisted the Working Group in the project development process bringing this initial funding to fruition.

All enquiries.

Chairperson – Ricky Storer (President Shire of Koorda)

Deputy Chairperson – Katrina Crute (President Shire of Brookton)

Project Manager – Garrick Yandle (CEO Shire of Kulin)

