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Letter to the Editor

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Trains return to Portland-Maroonra rail line

After weeks of rumours, trains may eventually be hauling rail freight on the Portland to Maroonra rail line again.

Under a multi-million dollar deal between Iluka Resources and the new freight operator El Zorro, bulk mineral sands will be loaded into freight containers at Portland then railed to Melbourne for export.

Resurrecting the Portland to Maroonra line will take hundreds of heavy trucks off deteriorating roads and provide a boost to employment, particularly in Portland.

This is fantastic news for Western Victoria with a 40-container, 1000-tonne train scheduled to leave Portland this coming week, the first of what is expected to be two or three such trains departing from Portland for Melbourne each week.

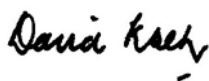
After such a long absence, motorists need to be aware and look out for trains as they approach level crossings and to observe new speed limits.

It is now time for the Brumby Government to guarantee its repeated claims of making contributions along with federal funding in continuing to undertake major upgrades of this line.

Farmers and regional industries across Western Victoria and up into the Wimmera/Mallee are sick of the rhetoric and spin as they are forced to truck grain and growing volumes of other freight by road while waiting for action by the Brumby Government. The community is appalled at the poorly maintained road surfaces that are now becoming apparent as heavy trucks tear away at what were previously sound road surface never designed or built for fully-laden B-doubles.

The Brumby Government must stop sitting on its hands and fast-track rehabilitation works to increase weight and train speed limits on the Portland/Maroonra rail line so that the licensed operator can deliver a timely and viable transport alternative to ease the ever-increasing number of B-doubles, and the likelihood of B-triples, rumbling down country roads.

Yours sincerely



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