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NSW PORTS CALLS FOR ONGOING RAIL INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT REGIONAL EXPORTERS AT NATIONAL BUSH SUMMIT

NSW Ports has called for continued investment in rail connectivity in regional areas to support the State's growing export needs at *The Daily Telegraph* Bush Summit.

Speaking at today's summit in Griffith, NSW Ports General Manager of Commercial and Business Development Campbell Mason said further investment in infrastructure to enhance connectivity was crucial to support regional producers.

"Private investment in our ports and intermodal facilities, such as the expansion of on-dock rail capability at Port Botany, has grown the capacity and efficiency of rail freight handling. It is critical that there is parallel investment in the rail network, to ensure reliable connectivity between regional NSW and our ports," he said.

"NSW Ports is committed to working with government and industry to ensure investment is channelled to projects that will improve the productivity and resilience of the rail network."

NSW Ports' assets of Port Botany, Port Kembla and intermodals at Enfield and Cooks River contribute \$13.6 billion a year to NSW Gross State Product and support 65,000 jobs.

NSW Ports and its partners have invested \$2.3 billion since 2013 to enhance efficiency and productivity. This includes \$190 million to double rail capacity at Port Botany, which handles more containers transported by rail than any other port in Australia – more than 400,000 TEU a year. Some 86 per cent of regional exports through Port Botany travel by rail.

"Port Botany is connected to the NSW network by a dedicated freight line and is the nation's only container port with on-dock rail directly into each of its three stevedoring terminals. Port Kembla's rail connections with regional NSW support bulk grain and mineral exports," Mr Mason said.

"Connectivity is vital to support reliable and efficient cargo flow from regional areas to our ports. Progressive public and private investment in infrastructure is imperative to ensure our supply chains cater for the State's growing population and trade needs."

Mr Mason said recent weather events had highlighted the need to build rail resilience. The Moss Vale-Unanderra line is closed for six months for repairs, while the Illawarra line was closed in April due to land slippage, impacting trains carrying exports such as grain and copper concentrate.

The proposed South West Illawarra Rail Link (or SWIRL) dual freight-passenger line would greatly improve connections for exporters as well as network resilience, Mr Mason added.

"Our way of life is dependent on strong supply chains. Planning and delivering improved connectivity to ports will be essential to grow our economy, enhance productivity and meet the needs of regional exporters."