



21ST CENTURY INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING HIGH-SPEED RAIL

The Greens' plan to begin Australia's fast train network.

High speed rail's time has come, but Australia needs courage and vision to get it moving. The old parties, stuck in the short-term political cycle, lack the will to really embrace this nation building project. Only the Greens have a vision and a plan to build a clean, efficient, transport future.

High-Speed Rail's time has come. Just when we need to improve the affordability and connectedness between our South-Eastern cities, boost the opportunities of our regional centres, support manufacturing jobs and reduce our transport emissions, the promises of High Speed are here. The Greens stand ready to deliver them.

As part of the agreement to support the minority Labor government, the Australian Greens secured a \$20 million feasibility study into high speed rail. That feasibility study demonstrated that it will cut pollution, enhance business and passenger transport and generate positive economic returns.

> TRANSFORMING A VISION INTO REALITY

Every continent except Antarctica and Australia is operating or developing High Speed Rail. It is a standard mode of travel for those living in Europe, Japan and China. The United States of America is set to join them as they begin construction in September on their 1,300km San Francisco-Los Angeles line. The Greens are the only party with the long-term vision to start work on the proposed routes along Eastern Australia now:

Line 1: Sydney to Melbourne (2 hours 44 mins) comprising of Canberra to Sydney (1 hour) and Melbourne to Canberra (2 ½ hours).

Line 2: Sydney to Brisbane (2 hours 37 mins) comprising of Sydney to Newcastle (40 mins); and Newcastle to the Gold Coast and Gold Coast to Brisbane.

Once complete, the High Speed Rail will stretch 1,750km linking 11 major cities and regions all the way from Melbourne to Brisbane. It would pass through the regional centres of Coffs Harbour, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga and Central Coast.¹

The commissioned *phase two* report laid down a plan for rolling out the High Speed Rail Project in several stages. The Greens will implement the accelerated timetable envisaged in the report. The preliminary requirements are preparing an investment plan, mapping the most appropriate routes, securing those rail corridors through agreement with the states and submitting a suite of comprehensive environmental assessments.

To begin this nation-transforming project, the Greens are committing to fast track high speed rail. We will:

- **Fast-track intergovernmental agreements and legislation to get high speed rail moving.**
- **Establish a dedicated High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) to develop and manage the project. The Authority would be responsible for:**
 - **Preparing a detailed financing and investment plan for the project.**
 - **Surveying the best rail corridors with the relevant state and local governments**
 - **Secure ownership of those routes and confirm the development and operation plan of the project through an inter-governmental agreement.**
- **Commence a comprehensive environmental impact assessment.**

Once all these preliminary requirements have been achieved, construction will be ready to commence. This proposal has been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office at \$664 million over the forward estimates period, plus the costs of the Environmental Impact statement (EIS). The EIS has been costed at \$570 million. The Greens have budgeted for the full cost of



the EIS but note it may not be completed over the forward estimate period. 100% of this cost will be funded by the Commonwealth government without any assistance or cost sharing with state governments or private enterprise.

> CREATING JOBS

In addition to all the social and environmental benefits, constructing the High Speed Rail will create a boom for manufacturing and construction jobs in South-East Australia with an estimated 12,000 jobs per year.

High speed rail projects overseas have produced many skilled workers. Spain's HSR line from Madrid to Valencia (at 430 kilometres comparable to Sydney-Canberra) created over 100,000 jobs during its construction. In California they expect construction of their high speed rail project to create up to 66,000 jobs annually for fifteen years.ⁱⁱ

A general rule of thumb is that around 20,000 jobs are created from each \$1 billion of investment.ⁱⁱⁱ Over the entire life of the project around \$114 billion will be invested, meaning the equivalent of 228,000 people will find work through the project in manufacturing, construction, engineering and planning.

Photo: Bombardier



> THE BUSINESS CASE

For every dollar put into the project, we get \$2.30 back as a public benefit for passengers, businesses and avoided transport emissions. Compare this with Melbourne's proposed road tunnel which when first proposed saw only 50c back for every dollar invested;^{iv} meaning it would not make a return for the public or private investors. Even with inflated traffic figures, the highest estimate the public would see from the road tunnel is a wobbly \$1.40 return.^v

The rail lines would annually reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 1.3 million tonnes a year, the equivalent of 365,000 cars taken off the road.^{vi} Airport and traffic noise could be reduced and could alleviate the need for a second Sydney airport.

Once complete, the network would make enough money from fare revenue to sustain itself as a permanent feature of our national transportation infrastructure.^{vii}

The Greens commitment to begin this crucial project by creating the High Speed Rail Authority and starting the preliminary stages will be funded out of federal government revenue (see figures below).

However, the bulk of the funding needed to begin construction would be delivered on the basis of the most efficient financing mechanisms recommended by the Authority. With our AAA rating, low debt to GDP and bond yields near record lows, it is the most opportune time to borrow money to invest in nationally critical infrastructure to be enjoyed by the generations that follow.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
	-14	-15	-16	-17
\$(m)	\$135	\$149	\$157	\$223

> THE OTHER PARTIES' SHORT-TERM VISION

While the Labor government originally adopted the Greens vision for this project, it is quite clear their hearts are just not in it. Since the reports were released, they have not committed any more money to move this project along and have simply called for a 'discussion' about the project.^{viii}

Meanwhile Tony Abbott's overblown and paralysing fear of debt means that no productivity enhancing, nation-changing infrastructure would ever be built under his conservative government. His commitment is to roads. He doesn't want any federal funding to be spent on public transport – full stop.

Only the Greens have a vision of a clean, productive, innovative and caring Australia thriving throughout the 21st century. High Speed Rail is a central part of that vision.

ⁱ *High Speed Rail Study Phase 2 Report* page 8.

ⁱⁱ California High-Speed Rail Authority, 'Creating jobs through high-speed rail', January 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ American HSR Alliance.

^{iv} Sophie Sturup and Nicholas Low "East-West Tunnel plan looms as a road to ruin" *The Age* 15 May 2013.

^v Linking Melbourne Authority East West Link Stage One. June 2013 page 7.

^{vi} Naomi Edwards *High Speed Rail: Benefits that add up*. Page 14.

^{vii} *High Speed Rail Study Phase 2 Report*. Page 2.

^{viii} Emma Griffiths "Albanese calls for debate on high speed rail link" *ABC Online* 11 April 2013.