

# \$56m project yet to begin

By Brenton Waters

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MILLIONS of dollars of so-called "nation-building" money remains unspent while the Federal and Queensland Governments haggle over how the interstate rail line between Acacia Ridge and Bromelton should be controlled.

The Rudd Government's \$56 million plan to upgrade from standard to dual gauge the interstate rail line from Acacia Ridge to Bromelton is now seven months behind the expected start date.

The Federal Government announced the project in December 2008 and said it would stimulate the economy and create up to 120 jobs, with an expected start date of February and completion due by December 2009.

The project, contingent on the State Government relinquishing control of the line, will make it possible for narrow gauge diesel trains from Queensland and standard gauge national freight trains to use the line to Bromelton.

At the time of the project's announcement Federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese described the project as a "win-win for the economy" and said the Government was taking "decisive action to support the Australian economy" by putting in place infrastructure needed in the long term.

Despite the project being part of a package to stimulate the economy at the height of the global financial crisis, a spokesman for the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), which has been tasked with carrying out the work, confirmed this week the project was yet to begin.

The spokesman said the Federal and Queensland Governments were yet to agree on a lease agreement over the line and he was unable to comment on when an agreement may be struck and whether the project could still be completed by December 2009.



**Cr Hajnal Ban has called on the Federal and State Governments to quickly sort out how the interstate rail line between Acacia Ridge and Bromelton will be controlled and start work on a planned \$56m upgrade.**

Division 11 Councillor Hajnal Ban, who recently announced her intentions to seek pre-selection for the Liberal National Party in the new Federal seat of Wright, this week called on the State and Federal Governments to move quickly to end lease negotiations.

She also called on Queensland Transport Minister Rachel Nolan to investigate why the project had been held up.

"The idea behind that funding was to stimulate the economy and create 120 jobs but indications are it has been held up because of a squabble between Queensland Rail and the Federal Government," she said.

"One of the Rudd Government's core promises at the last election was that he would be able to work side by side with the Labor state governments to get results, but while the State and Federal Governments bicker about control, our community is suffering."

Member for Forde Brett Raguse last week told

*Jimboomba Times* he understood the project remained on schedule and on learning this week that work was yet to begin said the Federal Government remained committed to the project.

"The Federal Government is committed to the project and the funding that has been allocated is guaranteed for the project," he said.

"The Federal Government is negotiating with the State Government over the lease of the line, this project is ready to go.

"I will continue to work with the stakeholders involved in the project and get this project on track. We stand by our commitment and it is up to the State Government and Federal Government to continue to negotiate for the right outcome.

"This project will go ahead and this is one of the many stimulus projects that is providing jobs and infrastructure for local economies."

Attempts to contact Transport Minister Rachel Nolan for comment were unsuccessful.