



High Speed Rail Authority
Statement of Expectations
July 2023

This Statement of Expectations (SoE) is issued by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (the Minister) to the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). It has a particular focus on the establishment of the HSRA and early priorities, and it is expected that the SoE will be updated over time.

It is expected that the Board respond with a Statement of Intent (SoI) within four weeks of receiving this SoE, outlining how the HSRA plans to deliver on these expectations.

Objectives

The HSRA is the independent and trusted advisor to the Australian Government on the development and delivery of a high speed rail network from Melbourne to Brisbane. This SoE outlines the Australian Government's expectations for the HSRA in accordance with its statutory functions and accountability obligations under the *High Speed Rail Authority Act 2022* (the HSRA Act), the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act) and associated regulations, as well as other relevant legislation and legal instruments.

The Government expects the HSRA to undertake the following functions:

- provide informed and evidence-based advice and recommendations to the Minister and other relevant parties on a strategic plan to deliver the high speed rail network;
- undertake evaluations, research and gather information to provide robust advice on costs and benefits of delivery, emissions reduction and environmental impact mitigation strategies, funding, financing and delivery models, standardisation of track and rolling stock and overall interoperability of the network across States and Territories;
- consult, liaise and negotiate with States and Territories and other relevant parties to identify rail corridors, obtain necessary environmental assessments and planning approvals, and set up bilateral agreements where necessary; and
- the HSRA should have regard to existing rail networks and stations within the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor, including faster rail corridors and proposed projects, and consider further upgrades to these corridors or provide options to extend faster rail corridors into the high speed rail network. In this context, the HSRA could consider, where relevant, previous work done by the National Faster Rail Agency and relevant faster rail commitments by the Australian Government.

Construction of a high speed rail network will be considered by Government following the HSRA's advice on these foundational policy and planning aspects.

Transparency, accountability and governance:

As the accountable authority of the HSRA, the Government expects the Board to meet the highest standards of transparency, governance and accountability for corporate and government-owned entities.

The HSRA's Board is accountable to the Minister for:

- **the effective establishment and operation of the HSRA**, including:
 - the appointment of an ongoing Chief Executive Officer to head the Agency, as soon as is practicable, through a merit-based and publicly advertised selection process in line with the HSRA Act and the Government's Merit and Transparency Policy;
 - the performance of the HSRA, including promoting the financial sustainability of the HSRA through the proper use and management of Commonwealth resources; and
 - the internal governance of the HSRA in accordance with the requirements of the PGPA Act.
- **Timely and accurate provision of information to the portfolio Minister**, including (but not limited to):
 - the obligation to keep the portfolio Minister informed of progress and issues, with written updates on the activities listed within the '*The Government's High Speed Rail Priorities*' section outlined below, provided through quarterly performance and financial updates, in addition to the corporate planning process; and
 - proactive and open disclosure of information that is reasonably in the public interest whenever possible, including publication of findings and underlying data. This is subject to appropriate clearance processes and the HSRA must justify and document when such materials are not published.

The Government's High Speed Rail Priorities:

Strategic Plan

The HSRA should set out a clear strategic plan for how to develop and deliver the entire Melbourne to Brisbane high speed rail network to the Government. This should include:

- an update of the 2013 study to ensure an investment-ready business case can be considered, including financing options for delivery;
- a strategy to progress any state or local government agreements necessary to realise the construction;
- a strategy to progress state and federal environmental approvals, including a stocktake of the existing frameworks and options for addressing any challenges associated with location-specific issues; and
- options for route alignment, securing corridors and how best to stage the delivery of the project.

For each of the elements listed above, explicit consideration of how these apply to the Sydney to Newcastle section must be provided within the strategic plan.

The strategic plan should also outline how policies of the Australian Government will be supported including, but not limited to, how high speed rail can contribute to:

- developing and promoting the Australian manufacturing industry;
- employment of Australian workers including maximising opportunities to ensure a skilled workforce is available to support delivery and operations; and
- ensuring environmentally sustainable outcomes and alignment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to net zero emissions by 2050.

Organisational Strategy

To complement the work above, the HSRA should concurrently develop an organisational strategy to ensure it has the capability and resources required to enable the timely delivery of high speed rail. The strategy should detail how the agency will be managed in a financially sustainable manner.

Stakeholder engagement and communications

The HSRA will engage productively and collaboratively with its stakeholders, including relevant Commonwealth, state and local government agencies and corporate entities, Indigenous communities, business and environment groups, union representatives, industry peak bodies, regulators and members of the public. The HSRA should seek and consider advice on the needs of communities when undertaking detailed planning and delivery of the proposed network and its interoperability with existing infrastructure.

To support this work, the agency is to develop a communications strategy that includes consideration of the suitable timing of engagement with stakeholders. This strategy must identify all local issues associated with the project and any recommendations must take these issues into account.

The HSRA has responsibility to support coordination and negotiation with States and Territories to ensure successful collaboration and dialogue between federal, state and local governments. This may include participating within multi-level, inter-governmental consultation forums or bilateral agreements to facilitate a nationally focused pathway for delivery.

The HSRA should also engage with industry and experts in Australia and internationally to ensure advice represents best-practice with regards to interoperability, technology, safety and sustainability.

The Government expects the HSRA and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (Department) to maintain a close and productive working relationship to support the Department's role in advising on policy, budget and other matters in relation to high speed, fast and faster rail, where appropriate. This will include the establishment of appropriate reporting arrangements.



The Hon Catherine King MP

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development and Local Government