



Australian Citizens Party

Craig Isherwood, National Secretary

PO Box 376, COBURG, VIC 3058

Phone: 1800 636 432 **Email:** info@citizensparty.org.au **Web:** citizensparty.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

22 March 2023

Senate hearing on project 'bigger than the Snowy Scheme'

On Friday 24 March, Senators on the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee will gather in Canberra to hold the first public hearing into Project Iron Boomerang—one of the largest infrastructure projects ever proposed in Australia.

Iron Boomerang is a multifaceted infrastructure project that carries a price tag of \$100 billion. Upon completion of the first stage, the project would deliver a 3,300 km rail line from QLD to WA; a fleet of 180 gas-electric locomotives; 10 state-of-the-art steel mills; 50 specialty-built ships; and a myriad of smaller infrastructure components along the route.

The project's primary purpose is to produce steel for export, whilst also meeting Australia's need for steel for the next century. Australia is currently the top exporter of the primary ingredients for producing steel—iron ore from the Pilbara in WA, and coking coal from the Bowen Basin in QLD.

Five steel mills would be built near Newman (WA), and another five near Abbott Point (QLD). A 3,300 km rail line would link the two, carrying iron ore eastward to QLD, and coking coal westward to WA.

A total of 44 million tonnes of steel could be produced annually, propelling Australia into the #2 position for global steel exports. Yet, this would be just 3 per cent of the total global demand for steel.

Iron Boomerang has been designed and promoted since 2006 by the private company East West Line Parks. The company describes the project as "a transcontinental multi-user rail infrastructure corridor and steel manufacturing complex which will revolutionise global steel manufacturing". Managing Director and project founder Shane Condon has appeared before several state and federal committees to promote the project. This is the first time the project has been exclusively investigated by Federal Parliament.

The Senate voted to launch an inquiry into the project on 5 September 2022. In a submission to the inquiry, Condon estimates that once fully established, the project could boost Australia's GDP by over \$1 trillion by 2040. This estimate is the total economic activity generated by steel exports, rail and shipping freight, expanded mining activity, and spin-off industries that harness the bi-products of steelmaking such as cement and fertiliser. The transcontinental rail line opens up remote parts of Australia, permanently employing over 35,000 people, while reviving Australia's lost manufacturing sector.

When interviewed, Condon described the project as being "by far larger than the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Snowy Scheme combined".

One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts, when presenting the motion for the inquiry, attacked the failure of previous governments to embrace the project:

"For too many years successive government have offered remote communities nothing except platitudes and paternalism whilst housing and services get worse and worse. Project Iron Boomerang offers a chance to change that future to bring prosperity to Aboriginal communities, Australian communities, northern Australia communities."

Project Iron Boomerang will address many social challenges facing remote regions, bringing employment opportunities, skills and training. As one community youth volunteer in the Pilbara stated, "the suicide rate here is eight times higher than the rest of the country. We need to give these remote communities—young people—a sense of purpose and bring new development projects within their reach. We need the locals to be involved in building their own future."

In response to Senator Roberts' motion, Labor Senator Glenn Sterle heartily welcomed the project:

"I know the Labor Party and Prime Minister Albanese—the Albanese government—support you, Senator Roberts, for bringing this to us. I think it's a magnificent thing, and I also think this is what we should be doing. These are the big-ticket items that, when I first came into the Senate, lo and behold, I thought we would be discussing on a daily basis. How tricked I got! But, anyway, at least let's get back to the big stuff about building a better nation ...

and leaving it better than how we found it.”

Senator Sterle also lamented how Australia has moved away from value-adding industries:

“We actually used to make our own steel. We used to have proud steel cities, where there were communities, there were bonds and there were families, before all this ‘fly-in, fly-out’ nonsense took over. It was before the farm was sold—if I can use the terminology of a farm. It breaks my heart to think, as I’m watching my grandchildren grow up, how disgusted they should be with the politicians before us who thought it was a good idea to contract out work we used to do and we did well.”

The project is also beneficial for the environment. Proponents of the project say it will improve efficiencies in global supply chains that reduce the impact on the environment, especially by lowering fuel consumption. Currently, ships carrying iron ore from the Pilbara to Asia come back empty. Iron ore is 60 per cent iron and 40 per cent dirt. Producing steel locally eliminates the wasteful return of empty ore-carrying ships. The project also creates opportunity for the use of captured CO₂ in secondary industries such as cement. For those concerned about greenhouse gas emissions, East West Line Parks estimates that the overall reduction from the steel production process alone would be 49.5 million tonnes a year, or 1,100 kg per tonne of steel produced.

The Australian Citizens Party has campaigned for the project since 2010, and describes it as fundamentally transformative for Australia’s entire economy. In a submission to the Senate, Citizens Party researcher Glen Isherwood stated:

“[It] would be almost impossible to fully articulate all of the long-term benefits of this project ... [It] will lead to a dynamic transformation of Australia, just as America’s 1869 transcontinental rail line transformed the world.”

To find out more about Project Iron Boomerang, [watch the interview](#) conducted by Citizens Party Researcher Glen Isherwood with Shane Condon and shipping expert Steve Pelecanos: