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## MEDIA STATEMENT

March 2, 2020

### **Helen Haines seeks Transport Minister's assurance on rail safety and funding**

Helen Haines MP today sought the federal government's assurance that it will seek state collaboration to provide on-going, annual maintenance funding for the North East rail line once a \$235 million line upgrade now underway is completed next year.

Dr Haines asked Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Transport Minister Michael McCormack MP for the commitment at a meeting Canberra where the pair also discussed rail safety concerns following the tragic interstate XPT derailment near Wallan on February 20.

"The current work being undertaken for the Australian Rail Track Corporation by John Holland is vital to ensure passenger rail safety and service reliability into the future," Dr Haines said.

"People in our North East communities have long been frustrated by passenger service delays and disruptions and they welcome the \$235m investment, as I do.

"But they also want to know that the line will always be maintained to the higher, regulated, agreed passenger standard once these works finish.

"Our communities want to be confident that trains on the North East line will then run on-time, every time, and safely.

"Only a commitment to recurrent funding to maintain the refurbished track to this higher standard will deliver this assurance."

Dr Haines earlier met ARTC chief executive John Fullerton where they discussed a formal request by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator for an independent review of the track's quality and condition between Sydney and Melbourne.

"The ARTC needs to demonstrate to passenger rail users and the Indi community that we can have confidence in the line following the Wallan derailment in which the interstate XPT's driver and pilot lost their lives," Dr Haines said.

"Mr Fullerton confirmed that this ONRSR request, made on February 29, is additional to separate inquiries by the Victorian Coroner, Australian Transport Safety Bureau and an ONRSR investigation into the Wallan accident."

Questions about North East Rail line service safety and the current upgrade project are scheduled to be put this evening in the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's estimates hearing.



Dr Haines said she also invited Mr McCormack to visit Benalla and meet the local community to discuss Inland Rail development and the revitalisation of the Benalla railway station precinct.

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Jamie Kronborg  
Media and communications adviser  
M 0409 912 967  
E [Jamie.kronborg@aph.gov.au](mailto:Jamie.kronborg@aph.gov.au)