**Senate hearing on project ‘bigger than the Snowy Scheme’**

This week on Friday, Senators on the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee are gathering in Canberra for 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 dollars. Upon completion of the first stage, the project would deliver a 3300 km rail line from WA to QLD; a fleet of 180 gas-electric locomotives, 10 state-of-the-art steel mills; 50-70 custom built ships; and a myriad of infrastructure components along the route.

The Project’s primary purpose is to produce steel for export, whilst also meeting Australia’s need for steel over the next century. Australia is currently the top exporter of the 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 3300 km rail line would link the two, carrying iron ore eastward to QLD, and coking coal westward to WA.

Upon completion of the first stage, a total of 44 million tonnes of steel could be produced annually, propelling Australia into the #2 position for global steel exports. This would be just 3 per cent of the annual global demand for steel.

Project Iron Boomerang has been designed and promoted since 2006 by the private company East West Line Parks. Managing Director and Project Founder, Shane Condon, has appeared before numerous audiences to promote the project, including state and federal governments. 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. Writing in a submission to the Inquiry, Shane Condon estimates that once fully established, the project could boost Australia’s GDP by over AUD$1 trillion dollars 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 the steel making process such as cement and fertiliser. The transcontinental rail line opens up remote parts of Australia, permanently employing over 35,000 people, while helping revive 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, who moved the motion establishing 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.

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

“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.”

Australian Citizens Party spokesman Glen Isherwood, who has helped promote the project, welcomed the hearing: “This is about developing Australia’s potential”, he said.