

11 November 2022

Assistant Director  
Inland Rail Review Secretariat  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Assistant Director,

**Re: Inland Rail Review**

I would like to make a submission regarding Inland Rail on behalf of Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE). TSBE is a not-for-profit economic development organisation linking local businesses with opportunity. With 520 members, TSBE is a strong voice for advocacy and supports sectors such as energy, construction, education, manufacturing, professional services, health, food and agriculture.

TSBE has been promoting Inland Rail as an opportunity for the local region since the Federal Government announced the project in 2017. Since then, TSBE has engaged frequently with ARTC to ensure local businesses have as many opportunities as possible to work on the construction of the project and to promote transport and logistics investment for Inland Rail's post-construction operational period. We have held multiple events and workshops to improve local business capability and encourage local companies to prepare for Inland Rail. In short, our organisation is a strong supporter of Inland Rail as we see the benefits of this major project.

Key themes:

*1) How could ARTC improve its management arrangements and structures?*

ARTC are in the difficult position in our region of building a major project that has no definite start date. There have been significant delays including multiple government reviews into the route across the Condamine Flood Plain, the overall route selection and the Senate Review as well as delays in signing the intergovernmental agreement with Queensland, which has essentially meant that this project has been on hold for a number of years. ARTC are trying to encourage local businesses to prepare their workforce and maximise their capabilities so they can work on this project, but with no start date and plenty of other regional opportunities, it is hard for Inland Rail to remain top of mind for businesses. ARTC could improve its management arrangements and structures but only once this project is given a start date and their employees and contractors have a clear understanding of timelines.

*2) The role of Inland Rail in meeting the freight task*

Inland Rail is essential to meet Australia's growing freight task. If Australia genuinely wants to lower emissions, improve congestion on roads, improve road safety and move freight efficiently around the country then Inland Rail needs to be built, and it needs to be built as quickly as possible. Inland Rail will also benefit producers in the region due to the price competition created through this new transport mode. Therefore, our region has an interest in ensuring that this project is undertaken as soon as possible.

*3) Processes for the selection and refinement of the Inland Rail route*

Toowoomba is Australia's second largest inland city and is a major agricultural centre. Many major national highways converge on Toowoomba such as the New England Highway, Gore Highway and Warrego Highway and Toowoomba also has exceptional air connectivity with Wellcamp Airport. The only infrastructure missing for Toowoomba to become a major inland port, providing an essential service for Australian transport and logistics is rail. Therefore, Inland Rail must go through Toowoomba.

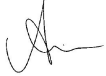
The route selection has been done and has been studied multiple times, which causes angst for those people whose properties are potentially impacted by Inland Rail. It's now time to get on with the project, set a definite start date

and ensure everyone has a clear picture of the route and the timeline. Inland Rail is essential infrastructure that is vital for Australia – let's get on with the build.

*4) Effectiveness of community and stakeholder engagement processes*

ARTC have split the region and have different community consultation groups that meet regularly to discuss issues and opportunities. They have spoken numerous times to our members at events and workshops to talk about how to work on the project. They have an office in the main street in Toowoomba and are open to having discussions with locals regarding the project. We feel ARTC have done what they can to engage business stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



**Ali Davenport**

**CEO**

**Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise**