



The NSW Farmers Association represents farmers across New South Wales and has had considerable engagement with the project planning and construction of the Inland Rail. Our members policy is supportive of the construction of rail infrastructure and of the proposition that an Inland Rail must deliver an economic advantage to regional New South Wales.

To assist your review I would like to address issues raised in your Terms of Reference in relation to;

1. The Inland Rail route
2. Stakeholder consultation and engagement and community concerns
3. Project management
4. The timing and planning of environmental approvals, land acquisitions and contingencies
5. Assessment of opportunities for enhancing community benefits along the route.

The focus of location of the issues that have negatively impacted rural areas is in the 'greenfield' sites for the proposed route; from Illabo to Stockinbingal, and from Narromine to Narrabri, and North Star to the Border. NSW Farmers has membership in all these areas and would be pleased to host the Review in these areas to see and hear first hand the priority of matters that have led to a dissatisfaction with Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in their capacity and the responsible entity for the planning and construction of the Inland Rail.

1. The Inland Rail route.

The review should focus on the proposed 'greenfield' routes, and the MCA justification and budget implications of those decisions, including a review of the existing reports and analysis of benefits to be derived from the operation of the Rail to those areas. The justifications for current route have been largely based on an imperative of achieving a 24 hour travel time, Brisbane/ Melbourne, where there is only some trains that will achieve that, and there is no current solution to port access in both termination destinations. If that parameter for justification is not valid, there are route options that can deliver an improved regional economic outcome, reduced danger of flooding and water flow damage, and for the use of current track infrastructure rather than greenfield sites.

Recommendation: Investigate theoretical 24hr parameter for decisions, and review decisions made with the outcomes of that investigation, including existing cost/ benefit reports on route options.

2. Stakeholder consultation and engagement and community concerns.

NSW Farmers is currently participating in a mediator led series of meetings with the acting CEO of ARTC to attempt to improve the manner in which they engage with landowners; these meetings stemming from the Senate Inquiry Recommendations that ARTC improve its relationship with NSW Farmers. To date there has been an ineffective and counterproductive process where ARTC have alienated the vast majority of landowners in the greenfield sections of the proposed route, through a lack of knowledge of rural practices, ad hoc engagement, insufficient consideration of independent hydrological assessments, and in setting a threatening narrative for forcing decisions from landowners. While the senior leadership of ARTC articulate a desire to improve the outcomes of their interactions with those impacted, this does not materialise into actions on the ground, and years of frustration with this process is leading to a further deterioration of outcomes from interactions between parties.

Recommendation: Invest in knowledgeable and empowered local ARTC representatives that can understand and assist in analysis of rural and regional issues, to achieve greater consensus on mitigations and solutions for impacts.

3. Project management.

With the breakdown of an ability to constructively engage with landowners in the greenfield areas, it appears the project is concentrating on areas where progress in construction and engagement of contractors can be more feasible. This has led to some areas having constructive negotiated outcomes, and other areas with compulsory acquisition threats. There is a lack of consistency in how the project will proceed and a consequential distrust of engagement with ARTC.

Recommendation: ARTC must communicate to those impacted the actual project status, including EIS progress, areas where the rail construction is prioritised, and actual timelines for each areas to progress.

4. The timing and planning of environmental approvals, land acquisitions and contingencies.

We recognise the relationship between TfNSW and ARTC in the acquisition process, however this has been handled appallingly. There is a lack of information available to landowners, and understanding from ARTC, on the actual impact that they may experience, that means they cannot accurately assess their losses or options in the acquisition or compensation framework. Despite this, ARTC push for resolution of on farm agreements. The Environmental Impact Statements lodged do not give sufficient detail to measure on farm impacts from infrastructure, noise and vibration, hydrological outcomes and isolation of land. Without this information the continued pressure to accede to ARTC offers, with a pending threat of compulsory acquisition, is unconscionable. Due to the lack of information there is also a doubt about when landowners are entitled to reimbursement of legal and other associated costs and when they can be deemed reasonable.

Recommendation: ARTC obtain a detailed understanding of on farm issues from the proposed route construction prior to entering into discussions with landowner, on negotiations for compensation or acquisition.

5. Assessment of opportunities for enhancing community benefits along the route

As mentioned earlier in this document, the premise that the rail route is achieved in 24 hours has been a justification for decisions around connectivity or lack of it, and commercial opportunity in the greenfield areas. While there are areas of advantage along the route, other areas, in particular areas of social disadvantage in the north west of NSW, are not going to see an ongoing commercial benefit from freight reduction costs or efficient connectivity. There appears to be a lack of concern around options for connectivity of existing assets, like road-rail interfaces - the need to modernise these interfaces when they need to be adjusted in order to suit IR's horizontal/vertical clearances, as well as to achieve measurable economic and social benefits to regions based on a strict 24 hour imperative.

Recommendation: The Review analysis includes an objective assessment of possible regional benefits that are currently not realisable, with the unlikely 24 hour travel time the justification for action not being taken in these areas.



Mr. Xavier Martin
President

Ref: 22313OC

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Via email: IR.Review@infrastructure.gov.au

Re: NSW Farmers' response to the Independent Review of the delivery of the Inland Rail program

Please find attached an issues analysis to assist the Review in your investigations into the planning and construction of the Inland Rail.

The proposed 'greenfield' areas are where our Association has received significant feedback on matters of concern, and it would be of a significant benefit to you to visit those areas.

NSW Farmers has a taskforce that is willing to assist you in any onsite visits and facilitate contact with those that you would like to meet, and for the issues you would like to investigate.

We have asked Nick Savage, NSW Farmers' Policy Director, to be available to assist you. You can contact him on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely


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President, NSW Farmers' Association


Peter Wilson
Chair, NSW Farmers' Inland Rail Taskforce

NSW Farmers' Association

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