

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE – Submission to Inland Rail Review**

I wish to make the following submission into the review of the selected route for the proposed inland rail project with particular reference to the options for the most effective route for the rail corridor around the town of Narrabri and the Namoi River floodplain. I make this submission having had great early involvement with the consultants used by ARTC in planning the corridor as the Manager of Strategy & Land Use Management from September 2013 and then as Director of Development and Economic Growth at Narrabri Shire between January 2016 and February 2019.

**Terms of Reference**

This submission relates to the following Terms of Reference of the Review:

(c) review the processes for selecting the Inland Rail route to confirm it is fit for purpose and has considered both impacts and potential broader economic benefits to regional economies and communities; and

(d) having regard to current market constraints and regulatory environment, assess Program scope, schedule and cost, including; and

(f) review ARTC's engagement and consultation approach, including options to improve engagement with communities and other stakeholders along the route; and develop a pathway to consider community concerns with the alignment.

**Consultation**

In the very early stages of ARTC's communications with Council I stressed the need for the rail corridor to be as far away from the downstream side of Narrabri due to the likelihood of adverse flooding impacts in residents in the vicinity of the golf course, noise impacts with proximity to residential areas and the increased cost associated with crossing the floodplain at its widest location. This advice appears to have been largely ignored as the project has progressed.

I am fully aware that ARTC has conducted numerous community consultation sessions and ticked the consultation box for the project but what they have failed to do is take any notice of legitimate input from the community regarding concerns about the negative impact of the route that seems to have been locked in without any logical analysis of the better options that exist further from Narrabri's town boundary which provide far better outcomes for inland rail and Narrabri residents. There is no point consulting people if you have set in stone the route and aren't truly prepared to listen and have **already purchased properties on your proposed route. That is not consultation?**

### **Cheaper, Faster Route & Less Impacts**

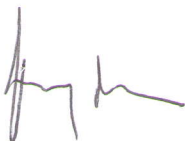
I am aware that a group of local professional residents involving a retired registered surveyor and a consulting engineer with years of local knowledge have done significant work in comparing an alternate route (copy of map attached) further to the west of Narrabri with the one currently proposed by ARTC and that they have made a very detailed submission to this enquiry which clearly demonstrates the potential for minimising negative impacts on Narrabri residents of flooding, visual amenity, massive truck movements down Gibbons Street passing a hospital, childcare centre and nursing home and noise that is associated with a rail corridor which currently is proposed in probably the worst location possible for Narrabri.

Local professional experts with a true understanding of the best location for a rail corridor have provided ARTC with the opportunity to:

- 1. Provide cost savings of between \$212.9 million and \$250 million for the Federal Government for a 40 kilometre section of the project.**
2. See significantly fewer negative impacts from the project.
3. Provide a straighter, flatter, faster route for the life of the project.

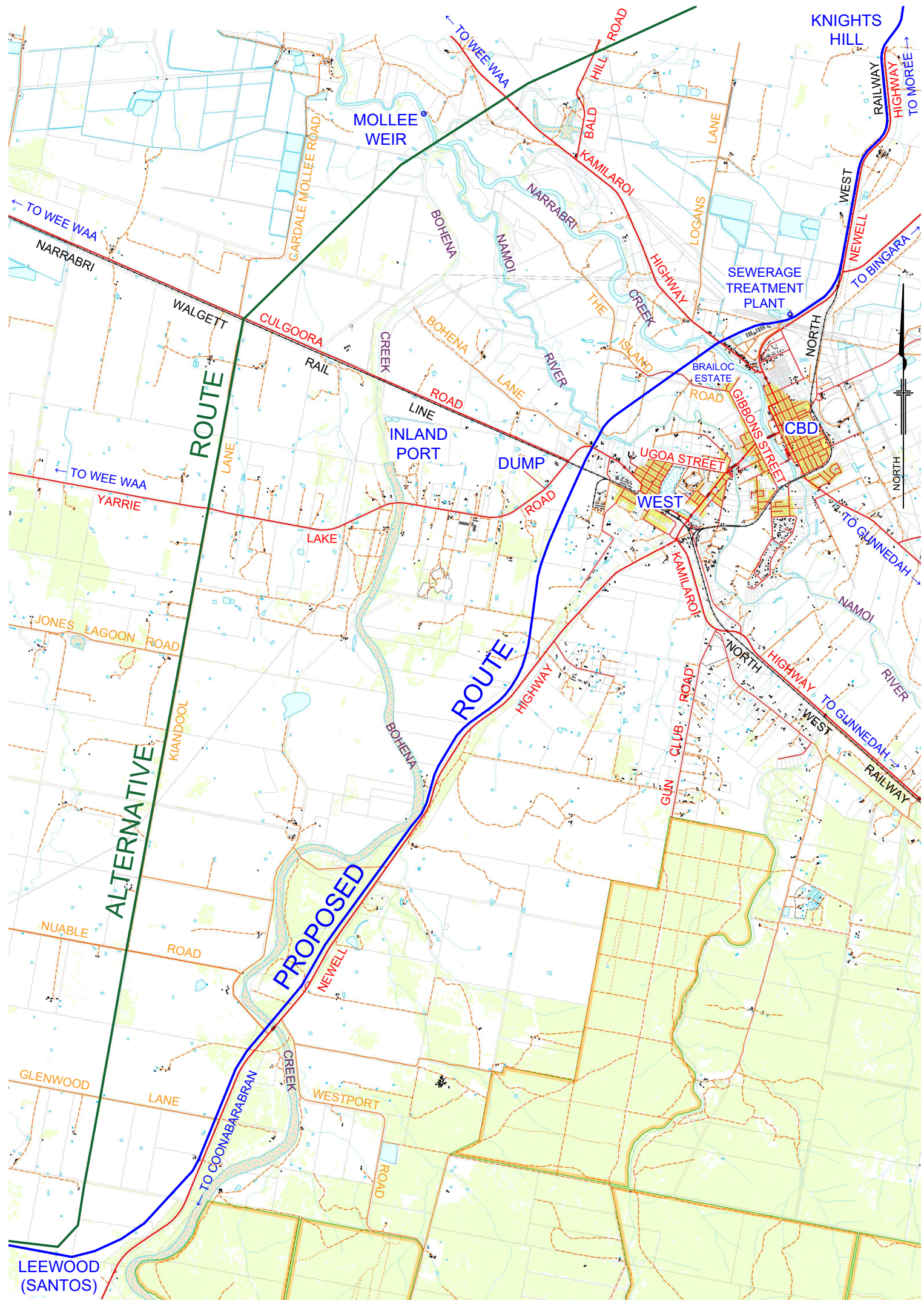
### **Recommendation**

It is my opinion that the rush to implement this project by the previous government has led to poor decisions being made regarding route selection in the Narrabri area and I strongly urge the federal government (not ARTC) to commission a proper independent review of the merits of the proposed alternate route (attached) for the inland rail corridor around Narrabri to unlock massive savings in costs of implementing the project, greatly reduce negative impacts on residents and provide a faster route.



Tony Meppem





ROUTE

ROUTE

PROPOSED

ALTERNATIVE

MOLLEE WEIR

INLAND PORT

KNIGHTS HILL

SEWERAGE TREATMENT PLANT

CBD

LEEWOOD (SANTOS)