

10 November 2022

Dr Kerry Schott AO
Independent Review into the Inland Rail Project
Have Your Say

Dear Ms Schott

I write in my capacity as Chair of the Council of Mayors (South East Queensland) (CoMSEQ), the largest regional local government advocacy organisation in Australia, which represents the one in seven Australians who call South East Queensland (**SEQ**) home. CoMSEQ represents 11 Local Councils located in SEQ and our mission is to consistently deliver better regional funding, policy, and collaborative outcomes for the communities of SEQ.

I am writing to make a submission on the Independent Review into the Inland Rail Project (Review) on behalf of CoMSEQ. For clarity, CoMSEQ agrees to its submission being made public.

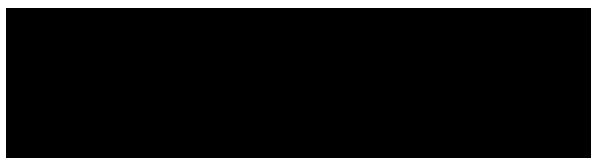
Introduction

CoMSEQ is encouraged by Ministers Catherine King MP and Senator Katy Gallagher announcing the Review on 7 October 2022, which specifically mentions an assessment of options for the new Inland Rail intermodal terminals to be built in Melbourne and Brisbane and improving rail links to the ports in these cities.

A long-held position of CoMSEQ is that the Inland Rail Project (**Project**) provide dedicated freight rail links connecting the Project to the Port of Brisbane. Importantly, CoMSEQ has previously written to the Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government outlining its position on this Project. In that correspondence, which is attached to this submission, CoMSEQ noted its member Mayors have concerns about the impact the Project will have on local communities in our region due to increased congestion and freight movements to and from the Port of Brisbane.

To ameliorate these impacts, CoMSEQ supports the Project being connected via dedicated rail link to the Port of Brisbane and this submission has been prepared on that basis. Specifically, CoMSEQ has prepared this submission responding to the following Key Themes:

2. The role of Inland Rail in meeting Australia's growing freight task and providing a Service Offering to meet freight sector needs.
 - *How could Inland Rail and access to intermodal terminals create new opportunities and benefits for your region/industry/community?*
3. The processes for the selection and refinement of the Inland Rail route and whether these processes are fit-for-purpose, including consideration of benefits and impacts.
 - *Do you consider ARTC's approach to engaging communities on the route is fit-for-purpose?*
 - *How could ARTC improve its engagement with communities and stakeholders along the route in regard to the processes used to consider benefits and impacts?*



4. The effectiveness of ARTC's community and stakeholder engagement processes, and opportunities for improvement, including ARTC's approach to addressing community concerns.

CoMSEQ Submission

CoMSEQ supports dedicated freight rail infrastructure that connects the Project to the Port of Brisbane. The construction of a dedicated freight rail line to the port will support the continued growth of the Port of Brisbane, allow more freight movements, and remove large trucks and other vehicles from the road network, particularly major freight road corridors across the region that access the port. Importantly, this will alleviate congestion on local roads and remove haulage corridors through densely populated residential areas and improve amenity for local communities impacted by road users accessing the port.

As noted by Infrastructure Australia¹, by 2045 container trade at the Port of Brisbane is forecast to increase by 300%, representing an increase of 4.8% per year. However, growth of the Port of Brisbane is constrained by the lack of a dedicated freight rail connection. With the Port of Brisbane already having the lowest rail utilisation rate of capital city ports in Australia and existing rail connections being shared between passenger and freight trains, CoMSEQ strongly supports the construction of dedicated freight rail connecting the Project and Port of Brisbane.

Accordingly, CoMSEQ welcomes investigations by the Australian and Queensland Governments to undertake further planning for a dedicated rail freight connection to the Port of Brisbane, including future connection alignments and associated costs and benefits. However, CoMSEQ calls on both the Australian and Queensland Governments to move beyond the planning and investigation stage and commit to connecting Inland Rail to the Port of Brisbane.

CoMSEQ believes connecting the port with dedicated freight rail can become a reality, particularly if government considers opportunities to partner with industry and the private sector. Already CoMSEQ has expressed its support for a proposal by PortConnex to build an underground rail tunnel system that connects the Port of Brisbane to an intermodal freight hub located near Ipswich. While CoMSEQ recognises the PortConnex proposal is ambitious, it is also a game changer in that it will connect the Port of Brisbane to an intermodal using driverless, autonomous and fully battery-powered trains. This means freight could be transported from the Port of Brisbane without any carbon emissions.

Other benefits that can be realised by connecting the Port of Brisbane with Inland Rail include:

- further strengthening regional freight distribution and building greater supply chain resilience into the nation's trade and logistics network,
- futureproofing the Port of Brisbane and improving the international competitiveness of SEQ and Australia by increasing distribution capacity and reducing freight movement times and costs,
- supporting the transition of the Queensland economy to an export-focused economy with greater connections across the Asia-Pacific region and supporting greater productivity and more local jobs,
- delivering significant community benefit by reducing truck and freight movements, congestion and noise impacts, while improving road safety for our communities, and
- supporting the region and nation's sustainability targets ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, including delivering a carbon positive Games.

With the numerous benefits associated with connecting the Project to the Port of Brisbane, CoMSEQ calls on the Australian Government to genuinely consider all proposals to deliver this nation-building project, as failing to do so would represent a missed opportunity to deliver transformative economic, social and environmental infrastructure for the benefit of SEQ and Australia.

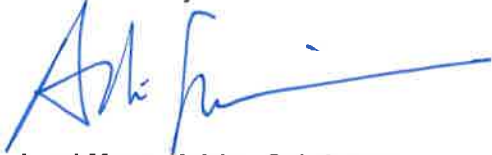
¹ Port of Brisbane dedicated freight rail connection, [Port of Brisbane dedicated freight rail connection | Infrastructure Australia](#)

One other matter CoMSEQ wants to raise as part of its submission is the alignment of the Inland Rail infrastructure. CoMSEQ welcomes the opportunity to further engage with the Australian Government on determining the final alignment and location of rail tracks to ensure the impacts on local communities are properly considered and the most suitable location is selected. Therefore, it is important that communities continue to be heard to improve the delivery of the project and that informed decisions are made having regard to amenity, flooding risks and associated resilience and emergency response considerations.

Further to the alignment of the inland rail project, our local government members would welcome the opportunity to engage further on important industrial precincts such as the Bromelton State Development Area (SDA) and Ebenezer Regional Industrial Area. This will ensure appropriate condition has been given to the opportunity of advancing local freight and logistics operations, to access intrastate and interstate markets.

Finally, CoMSEQ notes the SEQ City Partnership, which CoMSEQ has entered into with the Queensland and Australian Governments, provides a unique opportunity for three levels of government to collaborate and work together to deliver transformative projects not only for the benefit of SEQ, but the nation. Accordingly, CoMSEQ looks forward to ongoing engagement with the Australian Government as it delivers the Project and supporting the Government to make informed decisions that will not only grow SEQ, but Australia.

Yours faithfully



Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner
Chair, Council of Mayors (SEQ)

Attachment: [Letter from CoMSEQ to Minister King](#)

16 August 2022

The Hon. Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Email: Catherine.King.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Thank you for confirming time to meet with the Mayors of South East Queensland (SEQ) on 7 September 2022 during our upcoming delegation to Canberra. The Mayors acknowledge the important role you play in the future of SEQ and are excited to meet with you next month.

Ahead of our meeting I wanted to highlight a matter of importance to SEQ. The Mayors have previously written to the Commonwealth expressing concerns about the impact Inland Rail will have on local communities in our region due to increased congestion and freight movements to and from the Port of Brisbane.

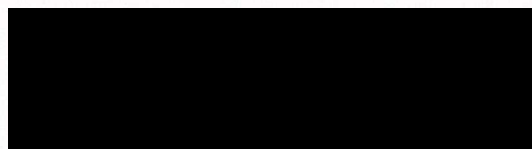
I am informed that best practice for productivity and efficiency of port operations worldwide, is for at least 30-50% of freight movements to be handled through inland distribution hubs. Currently, this is now less than two percent for the Port of Brisbane and is therefore contributing to congestion of the road network in SEQ. This issue will be exacerbated as our population grows by an estimated 1.65 million people by 2041.

Earlier this year Council of Mayors (SEQ) Board was presented with a briefing on the proposed PortConnex Project. The Mayors believe such a direct rail connection with a tunnel to the Port of Brisbane is essential to supercharge SEQ's trade and investment into the future.

It would appear, only an industry-led proposal such as the proposed PortConnex Project could achieve this, while delivering significant economic, social and environmental benefits for our region in a most cost effective and timely manner.

Linking with the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC's) Inland Rail Project at Ebenezer, would maximise freight movement efficiencies gained by Inland Rail for SEQ, Queensland and the eastern coast of Australia. Furthermore, the Mayors believe including a connection between Bromelton and Ebenezer would be important to further strengthen regional freight distribution.

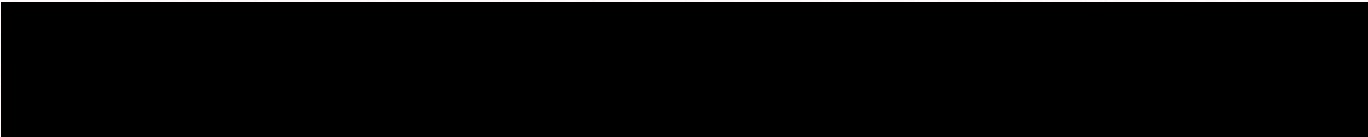
Establishing a freight tunnel to the port would deliver significant community benefit by providing an alternative to traditional heavy above ground rail and haulage corridors through densely populated residential areas. By significantly reducing truck and freight movements on SEQ's road networks, it could also reduce congestion and increase road safety for our communities.



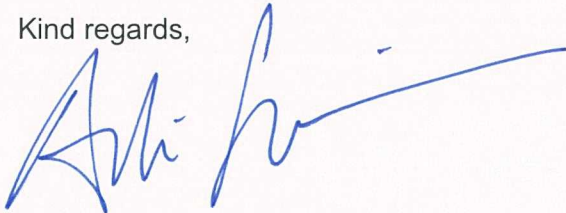
Additionally, utilising zero-emission battery powered locomotives as opposed to traditional diesel-engine combustible locomotives would further minimise capital cost of infrastructure through reduction in tunnel diameter, as well as environmental and amenity impacts. It is also complementary to our region's sustainability targets now mandated by 2030 and ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Games and further growth in the SEQ region.

An automated rail freight tunnel connection promises to futureproof the Port of Brisbane and improve the international competitiveness of SEQ as a gateway for our nation, by increasing distribution capacity and reducing freight movement times, cost and impacts on the community. These are all benefits which are heavily supported by the Mayors.

The Mayors acknowledge an industry led proposal could deliver significant private investment, job creation, economic and community benefit for the region, and has the makings of a project that could form part of a future SEQ City Deal review. The Council of Mayors (SEQ) has previously written to Queensland Deputy Premier Hon Steven Miles MP and the Commonwealth Government in relation to this.



Kind regards,



Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner
Chair
Council of Mayors (SEQ)