

Submission

Independent Review – Inland Rail

1. We are agricultural landowners affected by the proposed Inland Rail.
2. [REDACTED].
3. Our property is affected by the Narromine to Narrabri section of the proposal.
4. Our farming property consists of irrigated crops and in particular cotton.
5. We have extensive irrigation infrastructure which will be affected.

Response to themes

1: ARTC governance and management arrangements for the delivery of the Inland Rail Program.

1. *How could ARTC improve its management arrangements and structures to better facilitate the delivery of the Inland Rail Program?*

We raise no objection regarding the attitude of the Inland Rail Program staff we have dealt with for the last 5 years.

Sadly however, we have found that the staff have been very much lacking in terms of being able to give us precise or meaningful information in relation to the project and in particular details of the physical location, elevation and scope of the proposal – all matters which are critical to our future farming operation both during construction and thereafter.

We suggest this issue could have been resolved in the past and in the future if the Inland Rail representatives were actually aware of the construction details of the project.

It is of little use to people like us that the proposal is just a line drawn on a map – we need accurate and relevant construction details to be in a position to properly assess the impact on our very finely tuned irrigation farming operation.

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?*

As a result of the proposed Inland Rail, two of our local grain storage/loading facilities have been abandoned and as such road freight to move grain to rail heads will be significantly increased.

This will mean significantly more heavy vehicles on sections of the Newell Highway to move the grain that was previously handled and put on rail at the now closed local grain handling facilities.

The cost of that additional freight is now passed on to the farmer who must now truck his freight further.

Internodal terminals may create more business for the Melbourne to Brisbane line but these terminals require private sector investment and it is uncertain whether there is enough incentive to invest at Narrabri. It was stated that there was wide interest in investment to the Internodal plan but there is no evidence of this actually happening.

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?*

Please see our response to #1 above.

The process for selection and refinement has not been carried out thoroughly or answered in submissions put to ARTC by the affected local parties.

An example of this is the alternate route proposal put forward by concerned residents of Narrabri which was not considered in the initial investigation of the route through the Narrabri area and remains without proper consideration

We do note that ARTC Duncan Mitchell has stated that this alternative was looked at by ARTC, however there is no evidence that this has happened, and we do not believe this to be the case. We are concerned we have been misled.

Local residents in Narrabri have been required to fundraise and commission expert reports to support their case – reports which should/could have been done by ARTC.

ARTC has not engaged local communities and local knowledge, instead ARTC has held forums where ARTC has told us what ARTC was going to do and been resistant

to any suggestion which is contrary to the 'line on the map' which ARTC came to town armed with.

People in our area were never given the chance to have their questions actually answered – sure ARTC held endless forums and public and private sessions but never with the intent to properly take on board the local questions and issues and be prepared to look at alternatives.

It would seem apparent that the route design for this project was done on a desktop far removed from the realities on the ground – otherwise the ridiculously simple and obvious improvements to the initial route would have been corrected without delay.

The fact that the limitation of the investigation area is said to preclude certain alternative route options is simply proof that the initial investigation area was formulated incorrectly – this is not the local landowners' fault – and it should not rebound upon the local landowners.

The local landowners and the people of Narrabri should not be subjected to years of Inland Rail nuisance simply because this project was proceeded with in a hasty an ill researched and ill prepared manner.

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

- *What has ARTC done well in engaging with communities, including addressing community concerns?*
- *In what ways could ARTC improve its communication and engagement processes with communities and stakeholders?*
- *How could ARTC improve its engagement with communities and stakeholders in responding to concerns?*

We again rely on our answers above and say in addition as follows.

Information sessions have been well attended but the public are not given the opportunity to publicly put their concerns forward to all. To put it bluntly when dealing with stakeholders and community ARTC must give all information to the public that is true and correct not just Desk Top Reviews which they will alter at any time. There is a situation North of Narrabri where ARTC only came to agreement on flood water control the week before they started the water control.

The lack of forward planning on display in this project is staggering and underpins the very worst of the public criticisms which have been levelled at the project.

Locally the residents are confused as to how the project proceeds with land purchases and the like in circumstances where the NSW Planning Portal says that the Narromine – Narrabri section is only halfway through the approval process.

It is unsurprising that the local community has lost faith in ARTC – it appears that ARTC does not have to stick to the rules in circumstances where the rest of us do have to.

The Narrabri residents and ourselves as affected landowners, will be significantly affected and disadvantaged by the proposed route through Narrabri. Every sensible person including many experts agree that there is a better route through Narrabri than the one being proposed.

Narrabri Billabong Pastoral Co

Janet, Peter, Tony, Kylie Dampney

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We **agree** to our contact details being published