

I am completing this submission to express my grave concerns about the proposed route of the Inland Rail through the centre of the city of Wagga Wagga.

Our community has only had a limited amount of time to read and respond to well over 1000 pages in the reports. Even after local political representatives stepped in to push for more time, it has been a rushed procedure for those wanting to complete a submission.

As a result, **I would urge the Minister to consider the merit of referring the project to the Independent Planning Commission for its views, and to allow the entire community to have their say fully.**

This project is large, it is nation-building and is potentially transformative for many communities. It is, however, imperative that ***any transformation should not be to the detriment of the liveability within any community***. There is in fact, no advantage to the people of Wagga in this project being planned to come through the centre of the city. Quite the opposite is true. With Wagga Wagga being the largest inland city in New South Wales, these bigger, longer, noisier and more frequent trains will have many negative impacts for schools and numerous households who live and work directly alongside or close to the current rail corridor. It will also result in unacceptable issues and challenges for the wider community when travelling across the city.

Our city's population continues to grow with current development and future proposals for both the northern and southern areas of the city. Having this project utilise the current rail corridor which runs right through the centre of our city will result in traffic chaos...both during construction and once the construction works have been completed.

As a community member, I have attended several of the ARTC community consultation sessions and each time I have failed to come away feeling satisfied with the process or the information ARTC staff provided. Staff we spoke to lacked any satisfactory knowledge about the project. My questions remained unanswered, and my concerns were never recorded. Even at the Henty Machinery Field Day ARTC site, no-one ever recorded objections or concerns raised by community members. This indicates that the ARTC's stated commitment to "consulting and listening and responding to the community's concerns" is just a hollow statement.

Another major concern relates to the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Albury to Illabo rail section in southern NSW. Limited consultation with WWCC on issues of concern, has resulted in the use of inaccurate data, incorrect conclusions, an incomplete EIS, and a risk to the efficient functioning of the City of Wagga Wagga – both now and into the future. The Inland Rail project has been designed to utilise the pre-existing rail corridor that runs through the middle of Wagga. **A by-pass option has not even been considered.** In light of the numerous negative outcomes and concerns associated with the current proposal (see below), ***an alternate route which does not go through the centre of the city needs to be implemented.*** (When planning a highway or freeway route, towns are by-passed...the same needs to happen for this rail development.)

Negative outcomes and concerns:

- As a result of data discrepancies (as identified by WWCC), the modelling for the proposed route is flawed and the **effects would be substantially greater than stated in the EIS**. It is important to ensure the best interests of the community of Wagga Wagga are represented. The impacts of Inland Rail, mainly operational, have the potential to trigger significant adverse impacts on the community of Wagga Wagga, local businesses and services.

In its current form, this project holds fundamental risks toward the community and the city of Wagga Wagga, that are either not identified, incorrectly assessed, or not addressed in this study. The current proposed route threatens to leave a legacy of adverse environmental impacts through the heart of our city. ***Alignments which bypass the urbanised centre of Wagga Wagga should be planned and implemented.***

- WWCC has invested heavily in rail transport and the IR project through the Riverina Intermodal Freight & Logistics (RiFL) Hub and associated Special Activation Precinct (SAP). **The A2I project has failed to consider the wider strategic plan of the city**, especially transport related impacts regarding road/rail interfaces, resulting in community severance in the heart of the City of Wagga Wagga. ***A by-pass option needs to be implemented.***
- **Noise and vibration:** The current proposed route has two schools (Kildare Catholic College and South Wagga Public School) and many residences adjacent to the rail lines. The significance of these sensitive receivers as places of education and residences reinforces that adverse noise and vibration impacts above the RING thresholds are unacceptable.

It is unacceptable these schools and residences should be allowed to be impacted to the degree this route will cause. *A by-pass option needs to be implemented.*

- **Level crossings:** There are two urban level crossings in Wagga Wagga (Bourke/Docker Street crossing and Fernleigh Road crossing). Inland Rail has not proposed any enhancement to these sites as they are outside of the scope of the project. **No consideration has been given for the potential adverse operational impacts on emergency services, specifically response and travel times.** Emergency vehicles will be stuck in queued traffic for excessive periods of time which is likely to worsen. This is a significant issue which has been overlooked. The adjacent Health & Knowledge Precinct; centred around Docker Street and the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital including ALL emergency care being on the North of the line as well as ambulance and fire services being on the South of the line.

The operational impacts on emergency services and consequential impacts on the safety of the inhabitants of Wagga Wagga have not been considered. The cumulative impacts of ongoing and proposed rail operations combined with expected growth in traffic, prompted by WWCC's planned growth (both to the north

and south), will become a **significant traffic and transport issue for the community of Wagga Wagga. A by-pass option needs to be implemented.**

- Compounding impacts of the Bomen viaducts: **The traffic and transport study does not adequately take into account the adverse effects of level-crossing closure times, both social and economic, on this community.** WWCC notes that the 40km/h speed restriction over the Bomen Viaducts has not been considered in the EIS, this restriction has a drastic effect on train speeds at the Bourke/Docker crossing. **A by-pass would solve this.**
- **Air pollution:** As with operational noise and vibration, operational air pollution has only been considered at enhancement sites and not the full length of the line. The Inland Rail EIS lists 10 significant air pollutants linked to increased risk of dementia. **This is not acceptable.**
- **General operational concerns:** these relate to the future when more frequent and much longer trains would result in the priority allocated to Inland Rail Express and Super-freighter services being detrimental to regional passenger train scheduling and operations.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Federal and State Government stakeholders to re-consider the current route which will send frequent, long and large goods trains through the centre of the city of Wagga Wagga. A wider scope of consideration must be given to the on-going mental health and wellbeing of those in residences, schools, hospitals and the Medical Precinct in the immediate vicinity of the train lines, as well as to the wider Wagga Wagga community who are already challenged by the current transport options available to traverse the city. **The liveability of our city – the largest inland city in NSW - is at stake.** Our city should not be split in half and consequently suffer the adverse consequences of this project forever after. The cost of this project must be weighed up against the long-term health and wellbeing of the citizens and the future growth and prosperity of the city. A decision to build a bypass needs to be taken now to secure the city's future and capacity to grow.

I sincerely hope that someone will actually read my submission and provide me with an acknowledgement that my concerns – along with all others - will be raised and considered.

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