

From: Craig W Couzens
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Submission: EIS Inland Rail – Albury to Illabo

As a concerned citizen I wish to record my protest at the lack of consideration of various factors within the EIS Albury – Illabo. The recent Wagga Wagga City Council submission to your Department will provide much more detail that I intend. Thanks to the negligence displayed by Australian Railway Track Corporation (ARTC) this city has become embroiled in an argument that should never had been raised in the first place.

Firstly, two questions need to be answered.

“Are we planning for a modern railway system; one that provides fast and efficient rail service between the various states?”

And/or

“Are we just playing a very expensive game to the detriment to our national security?”

Frankly, this project calls into question the very competence of ARTC senior management and the various civil engineers who give frivolous responses to our quite serious questions. What are they teaching engineers at our universities? Not much of use it seems!

ARTC has displayed a total lack of vision by being so focused on using the rail line that passes though the centre of Wagga Wagga. This particular track (and its surrounds) was built in the late 18th Century and, in 1999 was placed on the National Heritage Register. Unlike the many abandoned rail systems that dot the landscapes of Australia the Wagga Wagga link has needed and got constant maintenance to keep it functional. It has limited impact or significance towards any important National imperatives.

With the *most basic research into its suitability*, ARTC should have realised that the Wagga Wagga historic rail link had reached the point where it has outlived its usefulness towards any important state or national agendas. With more study and thoughtfulness, the more obvious solution would be to provide a more direct route with capacity to cope with a range of goods – not just your panty-hose, VISI paper and household goods.

ARTC has no ready answer towards the vexed issue of traffic hold ups at level crossings. If they had thought more laterally, they may well have understood that extending the north/south rail line that passes near the Army Defence establishment at Kapooka could resolve this issue. Albeit, an elevated rail bridge of sufficient height would be needed to cross over

the Sturt Highway and the flood plains of the Murrumbidgee River. Freight trains would then no longer need to slow down to enter Wagga Wagga outer suburbs.

My final point concerns direct national Defence interests and the significant holes that I see exist towards national security!

The writer is a long-retired member of the armed services but has maintained many thoughts towards better managing various parts of simple defence exercises held in some more remote parts of Australia. Significant infrastructure problems had included the lack of heavy rail infrastructure where wide and quite bulky heavy machinery – bulldozers, tanks, troop carriers and more potent weapons have been limited to road transport (and other slow forms). It is rather ironic that the southern-most part of this Inland route also passes close by to the Royal Australian Army Base at Puckapunyal MTA.

In summary – the stubborn insistence by ARTC towards recycling old rail resources at Wagga Wagga precludes any quick or consistent supply of important defence equipment. At your review I am hopeful that you will consider the potential risks to our long-term national security posed by this short-sighted EIS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Couzens', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Couzens
(Wing commander Ret)