



DOC22/837915

20 September 2022

Michael Young
Principal Planning Officer
Transport Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment

(via Major Projects planning Portal)

Dear Michael

**Inland Rail – Narromine to Narrabri (SSI 9487)
EPA advice on Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) and Amendment Report**

I am writing to you in reply to your invitation to the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to provide comment on the Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) and Amendment Report for the above project, as well as the Response to Submissions (RtS).

The EPA's submission to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Ref: DOC21/51284, dated 29 January 2021) provided comments on noise and vibration, water quality, air quality and contamination, and requested that issues raised be addressed in the RtS.

The EPA reviewed the following documents:

- Narromine to Narrabri Project – *Response to Submissions*, prepare by ARTC, dated 2022 (the RtS)
- Technical Report 8 – *Updated noise and vibration assessment – construction and other operations*, prepared by Jacobs GHD, undated (Ref 2-0001-250-EAP-00-RP-0007), (the N&V Construction report)
- Technical Report 9 – *Updated noise and vibration assessment – operational rail*, prepared by SLR, undated, (the N&V Operation report)

1. Noise & Vibration

Previous comments regarding noise and vibration have broadly been addressed (although with little detail). However, the EPA has outstanding concerns identified in the updated N&V Construction report. Note that these matters were raised with ARTC in a meeting regarding the amendments to the Narromine to Narrabri project on Thursday 15 September 2022.

Mitigation for out of hours works in Table 10.1 and 10.2 in the N&V Construction report are not outside of the standard hours in the *Interim Construction Noise Guideline* (DECC, 2009) (ICNG), but rather are outside of proposal hours – that is 6 am to 6 pm. This is also inconsistent with the approach taken for other sections of Inland Rail, such as the recent Albury to Illabo. Out of hours mitigation (and the out-of-hours work protocol) should be based on ICNG outside standard hours. **To provide clarity for sensitive receivers potentially impacted by the proposal, the EPA recommends the PIR be amended to illustrate the mitigation outside standard hours from the ICNG.**

The contour maps in Part 5 Appendix I of the N&V Construction report refer to a 'rail earthworks green zone' and 'rail earthworks red zone'. It is not clear what these descriptors mean, and these zones are not mentioned elsewhere in the N&V Construction report. **The EPA considers that the PIR should describe what the 'rail earthworks green zone' and 'rail earthworks red zone' are illustrating, in terms of potential noise and vibration impacts and mitigation.**

During the meeting of 15 September, ARTC indicated that the 'rail earthworks green zone' appears to identify areas where predicted noise levels fall at, or are below, the night time Noise Management Levels (NMLs) in the ICNG and that works may be undertaken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is not the intent of the ICNG that works outside of standard hours can be undertaken as long as the levels do not exceed the NMLs.

While the EPA acknowledges that noise levels below the NMLs are unlikely to result in significant impacts, noise levels below the NMLs may still be audible at sensitive receivers, particularly in rural areas. **The proponent still has an obligation to justify the need for outside standard hours works for reasons other than convenience in accordance with Section 2.3 of the ICNG and to implement all feasible and reasonable mitigation, management measures, and work practices to minimise noise in accordance with Section 6 and Figure 1 of the ICNG.**

The proponent should also be required to provide evidence of support from the surrounding community to carry out works outside standard hours, as per Section 2.3 of the ICNG.

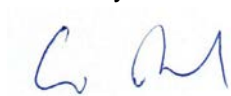
There is predicted to be significant impact from construction of the proposal. **The EPA recommends that any approval for the project should contain conditions requiring early implementation of mitigation and respite periods during construction. Careful and frequent communication with the affected community will be essential.**

2. Other matters

The EPA has no further comment on water quality, air quality or contamination.

Should you require clarification of any of the above please contact Anna Timbrell on 9274 6345 or email anna.timbrell@epa.nsw.gov.au

Sincerely



GEORGE OREL
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