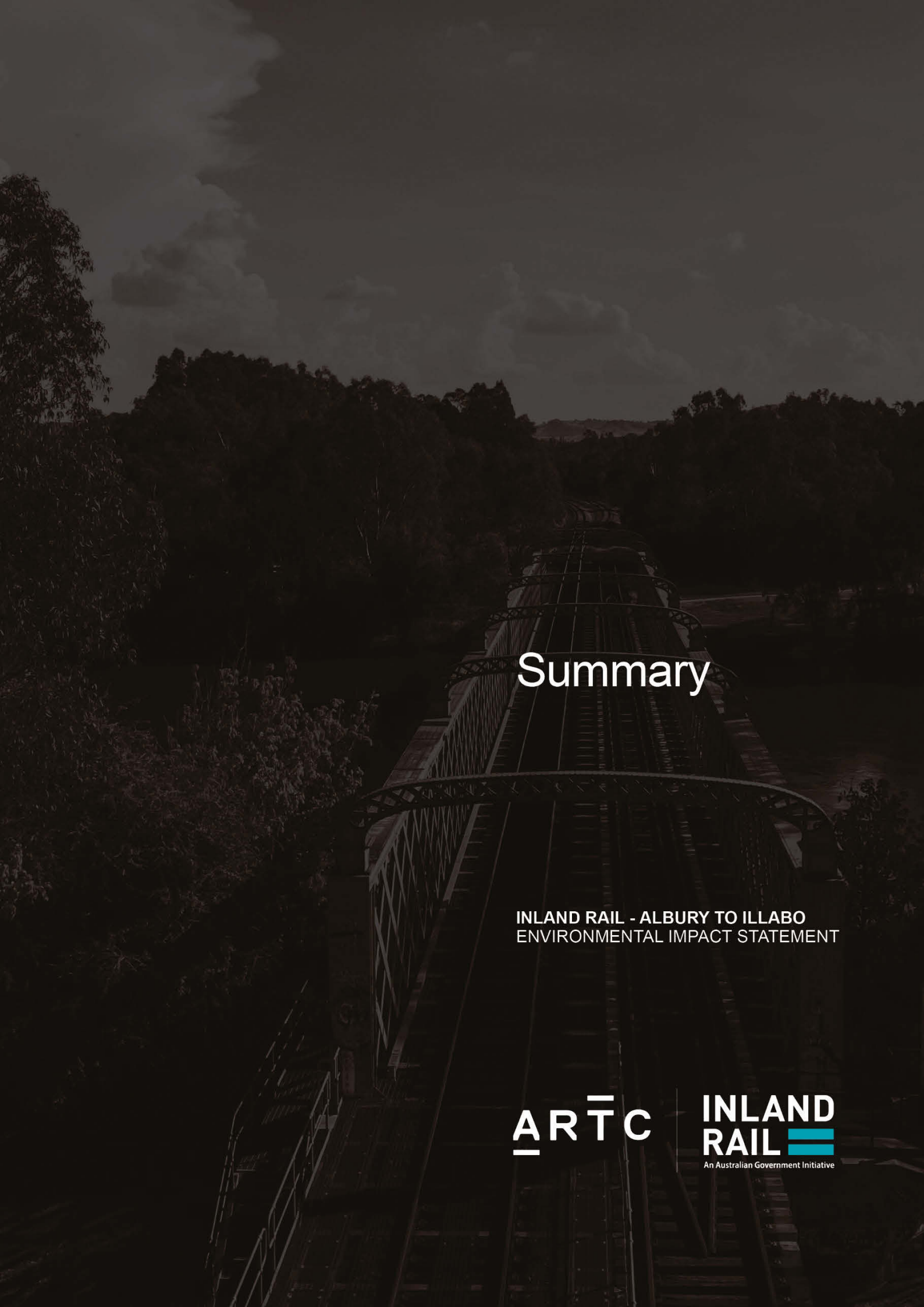




Summary

INLAND RAIL - ALBURY TO ILLABO
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

ARTC

INLAND
RAIL 
An Australian Government Initiative

COVER IMAGE

The Murray River bridge from the northern side of the river.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Inland Rail acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians of the
land on which we work and, pay
our respect to their Elders past,
present and emerging.

Disclaimer:

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Certification

This environmental impact statement (EIS) has been prepared under Part 5, Division 5.2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) and in accordance with the relevant provisions of Division 5 of Part 8 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (NSW).

EIS prepared by:

Project	Inland Rail (Albury to Illabo)
Name	Caitlin Bennett on behalf of WSP Australia Pty Ltd
Qualifications	Bachelor of Science (Environmental Biology), University of Technology, Sydney Master of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Sydney
Address	Level 27, Ernst & Young Centre 680 George Street Sydney NSW 2000
Proponent name and address (the proponent)	Melvyn Maylin Project Director, Inland Rail Australian Rail Track Corporation Level 16, 180 Ann Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
Proposed development	Enhancement works to structures and sections of track along 185 kilometres (km) of the existing operational standard-gauge railway between Albury and Illabo to accommodate double-stacked freight trains up to 1,800 metres (m) long and 6.5m high. Enhancement works would be required at 24 discrete locations (enhancement sites) along this section of rail corridor.
Land to be developed	Land within the Albury, Lockhart, Greater Hume, Wagga Wagga and Junee local government areas, as described within this EIS.
Environmental Impact Statement	This EIS addresses all matters specified in accordance with Division 5.2 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (NSW) and the relevant provisions of Division 5 of Part 8 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i> (NSW).
Declaration	I certify that I have prepared this EIS in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) (SSI 10055) dated 14 October 2020 and the relevant provisions of Division 5 of Part 8 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i> (NSW)s. This EIS contains all available information that is relevant to the environmental assessment of the infrastructure to which the statement relates. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in the EIS is neither false nor misleading.
Signature(s)	
Name	Caitlin Bennett
Date	1 August 2022

Summary

The Australian Government has committed to building a significant piece of national transport infrastructure by constructing a high-performance and direct interstate freight rail corridor between Melbourne and Brisbane, via central-west New South Wales (NSW) and Toowoomba in Queensland. Inland Rail is a major national program that will enhance Australia's existing national rail network and serve the interstate freight market. Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) manages the existing freight rail network in NSW and is responsible for the delivery of the Inland Rail program.

The Inland Rail program (see Figure S-1) is about 1,700 kilometres (km) long and has been divided into 13 projects, one of which is enhancements of the existing rail corridor between Albury and Illabo ('the proposal'). Works are proposed at 24 locations along this corridor in order to accommodate the requirements of Inland Rail.

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addresses the potential impacts of the construction of operation of the proposal. The EIS supports an application for approval under Division 5.2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act).



FIGURE S-1 OVERVIEW OF INLAND RAIL ROUTE

Proposal overview

The proposal involves enhancement works to structures and sections of track along 185 km of the existing operational rail corridor between Albury and Illabo. These enhancement works would be required at 24 discrete locations (enhancement sites) to accommodate double-stacked freight trains up to 1,800 metres (m) long and 6.5 m high along the rail corridor (see Figure S-2).

The key features of the proposal include:

- ▶ adjustments to approximately 44 km of track across 14 enhancement sites to accommodate the vertical and horizontal clearances according to Inland Rail specifications, comprising:
 - ▶ realignment of track within the rail corridor at 14 enhancement sites
 - ▶ lowering of track up to 1.6 m at three enhancement sites
- ▶ changes to bridges and culverts at enhancement sites to accommodate vertical clearances and track realignment as follows:
 - ▶ replacement of two road bridges and adjustments to adjoining intersections
 - ▶ replacement of three pedestrian bridges
 - ▶ demolition of two redundant pedestrian bridges
 - ▶ modifications to four rail bridges
- ▶ ancillary works, including adjustments to nine level crossings, modifications to drainage and road infrastructure, signalling infrastructure, fencing, signage, and services and utilities.

Construction of the proposal would require:

- ▶ construction compounds (including laydown areas) and other areas needed to facilitate construction works
- ▶ temporary changes to the road network, including road closures to undertake works on road bridges and level crossings
- ▶ other ancillary works.



FIGURE S-2 INDICATIVE PHOTOMONTAGE OF A DOUBLE- STACKED FREIGHT TRAIN PASSING THROUGH CULCAIRN

The proposal is generally within the existing rail corridor and passes through two major regional towns—Albury and Wagga Wagga—as well as several smaller regional towns in NSW including Culcairn, Henty, Yerong Creek, The Rock, Uranquinty and Junee (refer to Figure S-3). The proposal crosses five local government areas (LGAs): Albury, Greater Hume, Lockhart, Wagga Wagga and Junee.



Timing

This EIS is part of the approvals stage (refer to Figure S-4). Subject to approval, further design and procurement, construction of the proposal is planned to start in early 2024 and is expected to take about 16 months. Construction is expected to be completed in mid-2025.

Proposal timeline

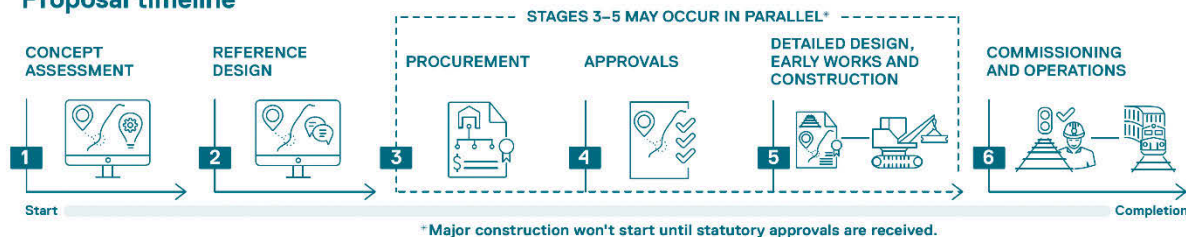


FIGURE S-4 PROPOSAL TIMELINE

Construction hours

The proposal primarily involves enhancement works that are on, or immediately adjoin, active rail lines that need to remain operational throughout construction, with minimal disruption. Such work is subject to specifically controlled working arrangements to ensure worker safety.

Work on operational track can occur under two types of safe working arrangements: rail possessions (sometimes referred to as closures) or temporary track occupancy authorisations (when there are suitable five-to-nine-hour gaps between scheduled trains that allow certain work to be carried out). Work may also be needed in areas adjacent to track work locations before and after these periods, to prepare for, or complete, construction. Construction work such as this would occur outside standard construction hours set for construction projects by the *Interim Construction Noise Guideline* (DECC, 2009).

The construction hours proposed for this proposal are described in Figure S-5. These hours have been developed to balance a number of considerations, including worker safety, community impacts and construction duration.

Construction hours

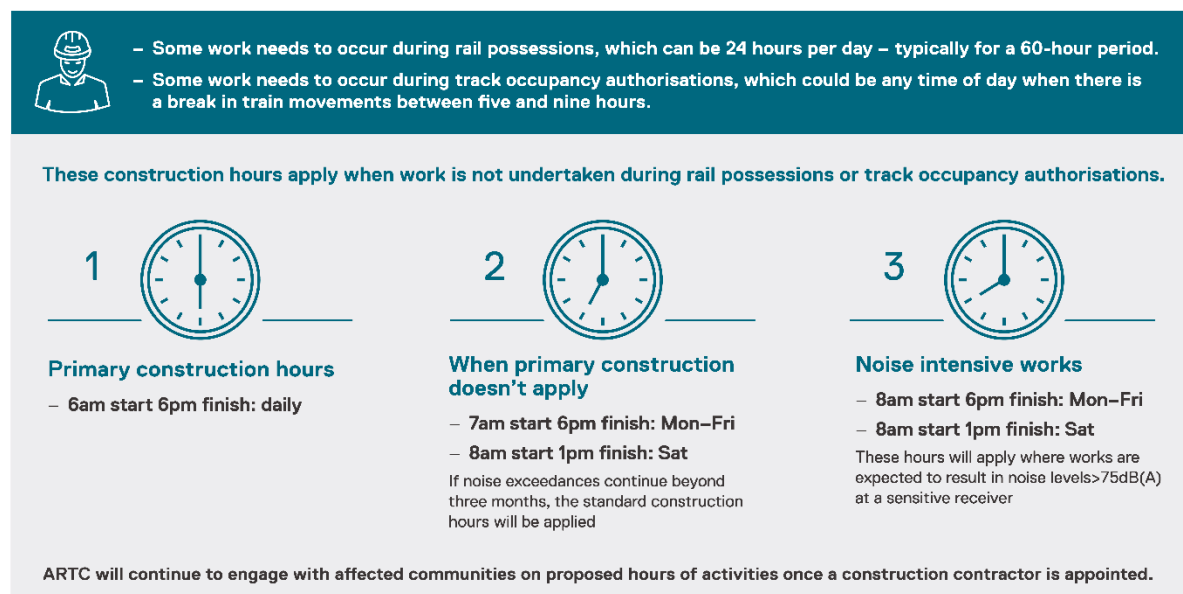


FIGURE S-5 CONSTRUCTION HOURS

Operation

The proposal would form part of the rail network managed and maintained by ARTC. Train services would be provided by a variety of operators. Current train services run 24 hours per day on this part of the rail network, and existing trains can be up to 1,800 m long.

The Albury to Illabo (A2I) section is expected to carry an average of up to 18 freight trains per day in 2025, increasing to 20 freight trains per day in 2040.

Standard ARTC maintenance activities would be undertaken during operations. Typically, these activities include minor maintenance works, such as bridge and culvert inspections, rail grinding and track tamping, through to major maintenance, such as reconditioning of track and topping up of ballast as required. Maintenance activities would continue in accordance with the existing environment protection licence (EPL) that applies to the rail corridor (EPL 3142).

Approval pathway

The proposal was declared to be Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) and is subject to approval by the NSW Minister for Planning under Division 5.2, Part 5 of the EP&A Act.

This EIS has been prepared to support ARTC's application for approval of the proposal in accordance with the requirements of Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act. The EIS addresses the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) for the proposal, which were issued by the (then) Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on 14 October 2020. In 2022, the department changed its name to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

The status of the proposal in the planning process is shown in Figure S-6.

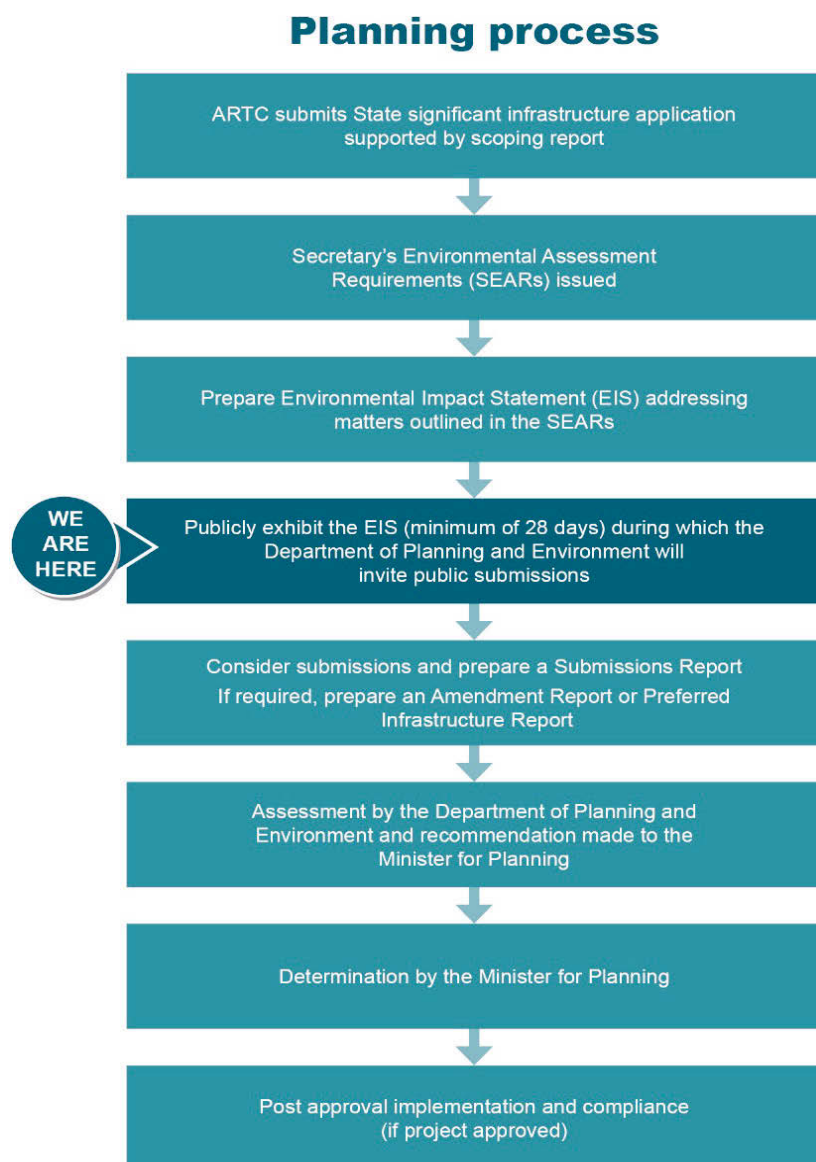


FIGURE S-6 PLANNING APPROVAL PROCESS AND STATUS

Objectives

The objectives of the Inland Rail program are to:

- ▶ provide a rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane that is interoperable with train operations to Perth, Adelaide and other locations on the standard-gauge rail network, to serve future rail-freight demand, and stimulate growth for inter-capital and regional/bulk rail freight
- ▶ increase productivity that will benefit consumers through lower freight transport costs, provide a step-change improvement in rail service quality in the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor, and deliver a freight rail service that is competitive with road
- ▶ improve road safety, ease congestion and reduce environmental impacts by moving freight from road to rail
- ▶ bypass bottlenecks within the existing metropolitan rail networks and free up train paths for other services along the coastal route
- ▶ act as an enabler for regional economic development along the Inland Rail corridor.

The objectives of the proposal are to:

- ▶ provide rail infrastructure that meets the Inland Rail specifications, to enable trains using the Inland Rail corridor to travel between Albury and Illabo, connecting with other sections of Inland Rail to the north and south
- ▶ minimise the potential for environmental and community impacts by maximising use of the existing rail corridor.

Need for Inland Rail

Inland Rail is needed to:

- ▶ respond to the growth in demand for freight transport
- ▶ address existing freight capacity and infrastructure issues
- ▶ meet the demand for transport of non-bulk manufactured products.

Alternative freight transport solutions with the potential to address Australia's current and future freight challenges were considered as part of a strategic options assessment for Inland Rail, including a 'do nothing' alternative. Without action, key transport links would continue to experience increasing capacity constraints and congestion as a result of inadequate infrastructure. The overall benefits of Inland Rail are shown in Figure S-7.

The A2I section of Inland Rail would contribute to improved freight transport outcomes, and address the growing freight task, by enhancing and modifying rail and other infrastructure to support the safe running of double-stacked freight trains. The proposal would connect to two sections of Inland Rail: Tottenham to Albury (T2A) to the south and Illabo to Stockinbingal (I2S) to the north. The proposal is a critical component of Inland Rail and is required to enable Inland Rail to operate.

The benefits of Inland Rail

A more prosperous Australia with a world-class supply chain based on a fast, safe, reliable, connected Inland Rail.

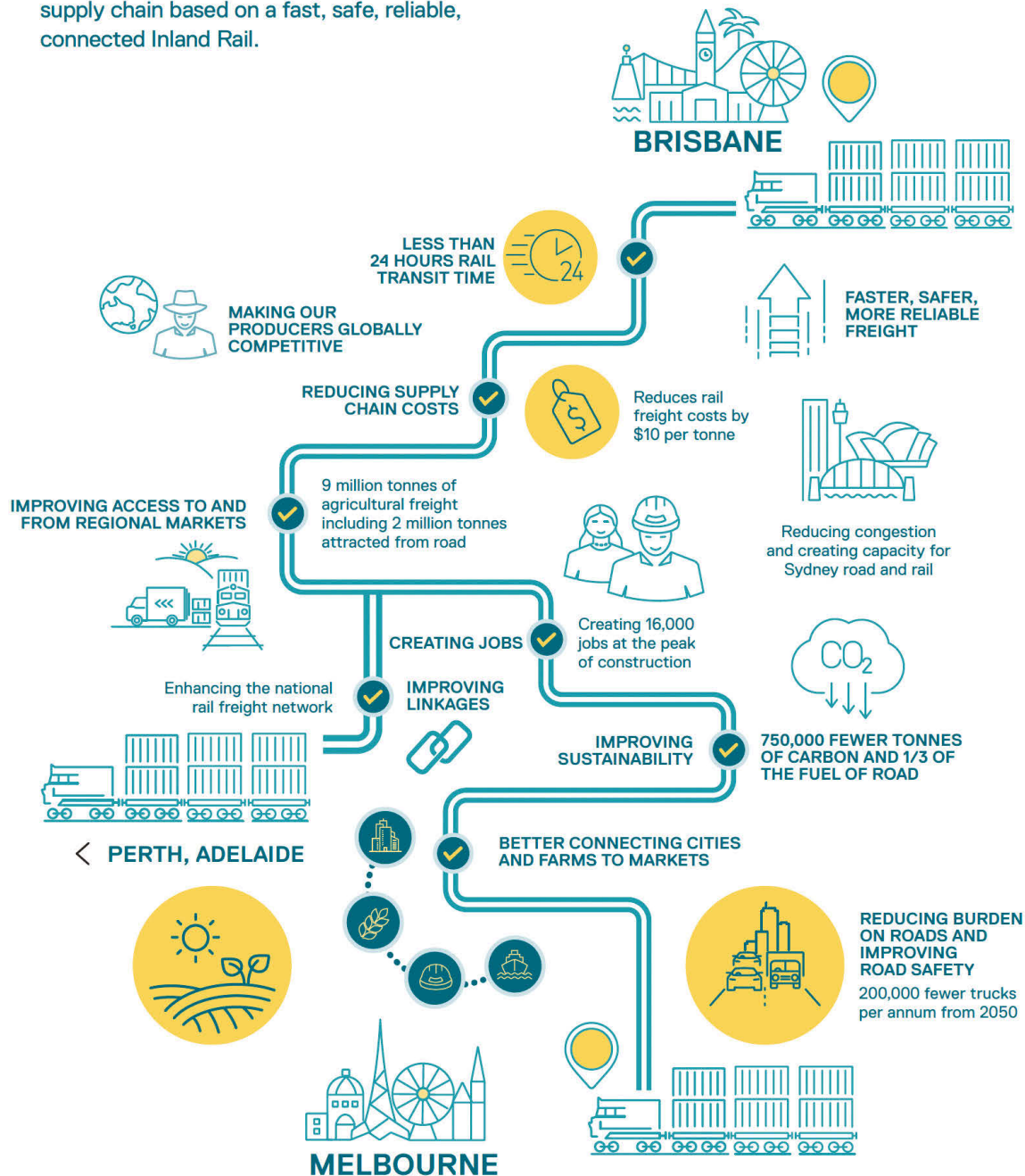


FIGURE S-7 BENEFITS OF INLAND RAIL

Engagement

Engagement with community and stakeholders has been an important aspect for Inland Rail development to raise awareness about Inland Rail and the proposal, understand people's views and issues, and obtain important feedback to help shape the design of the proposal and the environmental assessment. A range of tools were used to achieve this, including a dedicated website, email, phone calls, local media, social media channels and a mix of online and in-person meetings and information sessions.

Community information sessions have been held since 2018 to provide information and collect feedback on the proposal. A Community Consultative Committee (CCC) for A2I was established in February 2021 to provide a forum for the discussion between the ARTC and representatives of the community, stakeholder groups and the local council on issues directly relating to the proposal. Meetings with landowners directly impacted by the proposal started in 2020 to discuss land access, property requirements, and temporary land occupation issues.

Key issues raised by the community and stakeholders include:

- ▶ concerns around flooding, particularly at track lowering sites
- ▶ pedestrian access over any newly constructed bridges and ensuring they were *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) (Cth) compliant
- ▶ the impact of a greater number of trains running per day, such as increased wait times at level crossings.
- ▶ heritage impacts at a number of locations, including the Murray River bridge, Albury Yard, Culcairn Yard, Wagga Wagga Yard and Junee Yard
- ▶ ensuring adequate collaboration occurred with other departments/entities to investigate improved outcomes for communities
- ▶ concerns that community feedback was not being adequately reflected in design decisions
- ▶ facilitation of opportunities for local businesses with Inland Rail
- ▶ impacts of workforce demands on the local community
- ▶ construction and operation noise and vibration impacts to close residents and businesses
- ▶ property access impacts, construction traffic management plans and detours.

Consultation to date has contributed to the project team's understanding of the potential impacts and influenced the design to respond to and minimise potential impacts, where practicable. The reference design process is iterative and dependent on rigorous engineering and ongoing stakeholder engagement. Examples of how the proposal has incorporated community feedback include:

- ▶ addition of DDA-compliant ramps on the eastern and western connections for the pedestrian bridge at Albury Station
- ▶ enhancement of the shared user path design on the replacement Edmondson Street bridge and Kemp Street bridge, to meet the needs of the adjacent schools and the wider community. ARTC is committed to revising the existing design to achieve DDA compliance for pedestrians at the Edmondson Street bridge and Kemp Street bridge enhancement sites. To achieve this, it is expected that a footbridge independent of the road bridge may be required as a substitute for the footpath on one side of the road bridge
- ▶ replacement rather than removal of the pedestrian bridge at Wagga Wagga Station to meet the needs of community and schools
- ▶ refinement of traffic detours for both Junee and Wagga Wagga during construction.

The EIS will be placed on public exhibition by DPE, and submissions will be invited from the community and stakeholders. Submissions are to be made directly to DPE as part of its assessment of the proposal. When the exhibition period for the EIS has closed, ARTC will prepare a submissions report to provide a response to the submission received.

ARTC would continue to engage with stakeholders and the community in the lead up to, and during, construction.

Alternatives considered

Prior to this EIS, the route alignment of Inland Rail was subject to rigorous studies and assessments to select the route between Melbourne and Brisbane via Albury, Parkes, Moree and Toowoomba. This includes of a combination of greenfield construction and upgrade or enhancements of existing track.

Between 2015 and 2021, ARTC undertook design work to identify the preferred design solutions for the proposal. This followed a detailed review of where enhancement works would be required to accommodate double-stacked trains along the existing rail corridor between Albury and Illabo. Twenty-four locations were identified that would require enhancement works. The assessment of options for each enhancement site considered a range of criteria, including technical, safety and operational requirements, environmental, community and property impacts, and constructability. This process considered issues raised during engagement with key stakeholders and the community, enabling the design to respond to and minimise potential impacts, where practicable.

The key treatments identified for the proposal were:

- ▶ lowering the track beneath a bridge or replacing or modifying a bridge
- ▶ widening or shifting the track and/or adjusting adjacent signal structures
- ▶ modifying a bridge and/or signal structure.

Alternative construction methodology options were considered for more complex enhancement works such as road and pedestrian bridge replacement, track lowering, track realignment and culvert works. For road bridge replacement, staged bridge replacement (demolishing and constructing half a bridge at a time and maintaining public access to one lane and construction of a bridge offline (adjacent to an existing bridge) to maintain access

during construction) was not considered feasible. This would have required prolonged full and partial bridge closures, substantial changes to the surround traffic signalling and intersections, property acquisitions and would have had substantial cost and time implications.

For pedestrian bridges, the establishment of temporary pedestrian bridges adjacent to the existing bridges during construction was considered but not carried forward as site constraints and structural requirements for temporary structures above an active rail corridor are similar to those required for a permanent bridge and would increase the construction time, costs and proposal footprint.

Through engagement with surrounding stakeholders and the community, the sequencing/ staging of the replacements of Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge, Edmondson Street bridge and Wagga Wagga Station pedestrian bridge so that one of the three bridges would remain open during construction was identified as a more favourable option to minimise impacts to pedestrian connectivity. This represents the preferred option now incorporated in the construction program.

The design development of the proposal and development of the construction methodology has included a focus on avoiding or minimising potential impacts at all enhancement sites. Further detail on how the preferred design solution for the proposal has been selected is provided in Chapter 6: Alternatives and proposal options.

Summary of key findings of the EIS

Traffic and transport

The existing rail corridor between Albury and Illabo is part of the Main South Line, which carries freight and passenger trains between Albury and Sydney. To avoid disruption to operation of the rail network, construction activities impacting the track or worker safety would occur during existing scheduled possession periods or track occupancy authorisations (for further discussion refer to Chapter 8: Construction of the proposal).

Construction vehicle movements on the road network would result in little to no change to road performance during construction, including during peak construction periods. The proposal has sought to minimise the use of and impacts to local roads, and to avoid the closure of key roads, such as the Olympic Highway, as far as practicable. To moderate any construction impacts and potential safety issues associated with either access, vehicle movements or diversions, road safety audits would be undertaken, and Construction Traffic Transport and Access Management Plans developed for each enhancement site prior to construction.

Temporary traffic diversions are required for road bridge works at Edmondson Street bridge, Wagga Wagga (about nine months); Kemp Street bridge, Junee (about eight months); and level-crossings at Henty and four locations along the Junee to Illabo clearances enhancement site (approximately three to five days at each level crossing).

The temporary diversions would increase travel times and the performance of certain roads and intersections along these routes would be impacted. The closure of the Edmondson Street bridge in Wagga Wagga in particular would result in significant delays during peak-hour periods (based on worst-case assumptions) due to increased road congestion at intersections that are already constrained. At Junee, a short-term diversion onto local roads would be required during intersection works at the Olympic Highway/Kemp Street intersection. This would require preventative road works to offset impacts from higher than typical traffic (including heavy vehicles). Regional traffic movements would also be encouraged to use Old Junee Road to limit impacts to local community, and opportunities to reduce the duration of level crossing closures at the Olympic Highway, Junee would be investigated during detailed design prior to the closure of Kemp Street bridge (refer to Chapter 13: Social).

Where detours require changes to the road network, further engagement would be undertaken with road authorities (local councils and Transport for NSW (TfNSW)) and public transport service providers, as well as with local communities.

Access for active transport across the rail corridor would be disrupted during construction at Albury, Wagga Wagga and Junee. In addition to closure of road bridges, diversions are required for Albury Station pedestrian bridge, Albury (about four months); Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge, Wagga Wagga (about six months); and Wagga Wagga Station pedestrian bridge, Wagga Wagga (about six months). The required diversions would increase travel times for pedestrians and cyclists, with some resulting in detours of up to 2 km for longer-term bridge closures. In Wagga Wagga, three bridges would be impacted over the duration of construction. These bridge works have been staged to keep one bridge open at all times and to limit the duration and cumulative impact on the community in response to consultation with Wagga Wagga City Council, proximate residents, schools and the wider community. The duration of all bridge closures (pedestrian and road), the staging of these works and the required detours would be further refined during detailed design and consultation with TfNSW and other relevant stakeholders (such as local councils).

Operation of the proposal would involve larger and more frequent freight trains passing along the corridor, increasing the freight transportation capacity between Albury and Illabo. Additional level crossing closure would be caused by the more frequent passing of trains. The maximum duration for vehicles would stop at level crossings would be around two minutes; however, the number of vehicles stopping for level crossing closure in peak hour would be the same with and without the proposal.

Modifications would be undertaken at nine level crossings to accommodate the proposal, or to improve safety at these level crossings. This includes the conversion of two level crossings from passive to active vehicular controls, providing boom gates and flashing lights. While minor changes to the roads have been identified to allow for operation of the modified level crossings, no significant changes to operation of the road network are proposed.

The replacement pedestrian bridges at Albury and Wagga would improve accessibility at these locations and would be designed to be compliant with *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA), a factor that was raised during engagement for the proposal as being important to councils, the Department of Education, community groups and general community members.

The two road bridges at Wagga Wagga (Edmondson Street) and Junee (Kemp Street) would be replaced to accommodate the operation of taller trains. The design of these bridges has incorporated shared paths on both sides of Edmondson Street bridge at Wagga Wagga and an extra-wide shared path on the northern side of the Kemp Street bridge design in response to community and key stakeholder feedback. Further consultation with Wagga Wagga City Council and Junee Shire Council has confirmed the requirement for achieving DDA-compliant pedestrian access at the Edmondson Street bridge and Kemp Street bridge enhancement sites. ARTC is committed to revising the existing design to achieve DDA compliance. To achieve this, it is expected that a footbridge independent of the road bridge may be required as a substitute for the footpath on one side of the road bridge.

Non-Aboriginal heritage

There are 42 registered heritage items located within the proposal site (including five conservation areas), found at 20 of the 24 enhancement sites. This includes nine heritage items that are listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR) with curtilages that overlap with 14 enhancement sites. Several of these items are also registered on LEPs or section 170 registers. Three unregistered potential heritage items were also identified to have local heritage value during site inspections carried out for this assessment.

During engagement with key stakeholders, concerns were raised about heritage issues at a number of locations, including Murray River bridge, Albury Yard, Culcairn Yard, Wagga Yard and Junee Yard. In response, the proposal has been designed and refined to minimise impacts to heritage items within the proposal site. Construction compounds, footprints and works have also been designed with minimal excavation requirements to minimise impacts to items and areas of archaeological potential within the proposal site as far as practicable.

The proposal would have direct and indirect impacts to multiple state, local and section 170 heritage listed items. Key impacts associated with the proposal would occur where bridges are altered, removed or replaced with new bridges within the station precincts. Options that avoided the demolition of these structures were not considered to be feasible or were not selected as the preferred option following consideration of the Inland Rail specifications, as well as the potential environmental and community impacts of the available alternatives (for further discussion, refer to Chapter 6: Alternatives and proposal options).

The proposal would result in:

- ▶ major impacts to the Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge (a section 170 register item); Edmondson Street bridge (unregistered potential heritage item); and Kemp Street bridge (unregistered potential heritage item) due to the demolition and replacement of these bridges
- ▶ major impacts to the Yerong Creek Railway Station archaeological site (unregistered potential heritage item) due to proposed ground disturbance
- ▶ moderate impacts to the Murray River Bridge (the Albury rail bridge over the Murray River (SHR 01020)) due to bridge alterations; Albury Railway Station and Yard Group (SHR 01073) due to the replacement of the pedestrian bridge and other changes in the yard; and Culcairn Railway Station and Yard Group (SHR 01126) and Junee Railway Station, Yard and Locomotive Depot Group (SHR 01173) due to removal of redundant pedestrian bridges
- ▶ minor impacts to Wagga Wagga Railway Station and Yard Group (SHR 01279) due to the replacement of the pedestrian bridge and other changes in the vicinity of the item (such as Edmondson Street bridge replacement)
- ▶ negligible impacts to the Henty Railway Station and Yard Group (SHR 01169), The Rock Station and Yard Group (SHR 01268) and the Bomen Railway Station (SHR 01093)
- ▶ minor to negligible impact at all other local and section 170 registered heritage items
- ▶ across all enhancement sites, there would be a major cumulative impact due to the collective impact on railway heritage values.

Mitigation and management measures would be implemented to minimise impacts where complete avoidance is not practicable. Additional opportunities to minimise heritage impacts through design or construction planning would be explored during detailed design and heritage interpretation and management plans would be prepared. Where the avoidance of heritage items and archaeological sites is not possible, detailed recording and/or salvage excavation would be undertaken prior to construction.

During engagement with key stakeholders, Greater Hume Shire Council and Junee Shire Council indicated their interest in repurposing the current decommissioned pedestrian bridges at Culcairn and Junee stations respectively.

The gifting of the Junee and Culcairn pedestrian bridges for the purpose of reuse elsewhere would be investigated with the relevant council prior to removal.

Land use and property

The proposal site consists primarily of the existing active rail corridor between Albury and to the north-east of Illabo, which is owned by the NSW Government and leased, managed and operated by ARTC. The rail corridor is part of the Main South Line, which is used for transport of both freight and passenger trains between Melbourne and Sydney. Inland Rail is identified in strategic planning policies, such as the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*, as providing an essential role in freight and logistic hubs within the region.

Construction of the proposal would require the temporary occupation of around 27 hectares (ha) of land outside the rail corridor, which primarily consists of road reserves and open areas adjacent to the enhancement sites. Other land uses that would be temporarily impacted are public recreation; industrial; commercial and commercial accommodation (including the rear of a service station and vacant properties); educational; residential (currently vacant); and agricultural. The area temporarily required for the proposal at each property generally consists of a small portion of the total property and would not impact ongoing use, viability, or productivity of the broader property during construction. The exception to this would be the Billy Hughes bridge enhancement site, where a private property would be required. However, this property is currently leased for sheep grazing and forms part of a broader lease totaling around 200 ha. As with all privately owned land required for construction, ARTC would enter into a lease or other agreement for the use of land and would restore the property to a condition as determined in that agreement.

Key impacts to land use during construction are temporary loss of access to open areas; access impacts from level crossing and bridge works; construction areas intersecting with the grain terminal operational area; and increased biosecurity risks from construction activities. Potential property access impacts were raised as a key concern for community and councils during engagement with key stakeholders. Mitigation measures, developed in conjunction with community and stakeholder consultation, would be implemented to minimise these impacts.

No privately owned land is proposed to be permanently acquired for the proposal. An easement (25 m wide) would be established in the north-eastern corner of a private property (Lot 2 DP543801) at the Edmondson Street bridge enhancement site to accommodate a relocated electrical power line. The proposal has been designed to minimise impacts to private property during construction, including the following:

- ▶ selection of a temporary creek crossing at the Uranquinty Yard clearances enhancement site to avoid the need for access via a private agricultural property
- ▶ construction access to Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge is prioritised from Fox Street to minimise impacts to the Telstra depot property on Brookong Avenue
- ▶ adjustments to Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge to avoid direct impacts on the Erin Earth Centre property.

A reconfiguration of open space at Kemp Street bridge enhancement site would be required to accommodate the altered intersection at this location. At the completion of construction, there would be no net loss of open space, with additional open space created between the Olympic Highway and the rail corridor; however, the eastern portion of Endeavour Park would be reduced by about 50 square metres (m²). The landscaping and urban design of this space would be refined in consultation with Junee Shire Council during detailed design.

Social

During construction, the proposal would result in positive social impacts through the creation of opportunities for direct employment as well as procurement for the supply of materials and services. The most substantial negative social impacts are associated with the impact of the construction workforce and accommodation requirements for the proposal on nearby towns and through, reduced mobility resulting from delays and diversions of existing transport routes. Other negative social impacts may include impacts to local amenity, health and wellbeing from the generation of noise and vibration, construction traffic, the visual presence of construction activity and potential changes to air quality. Impacts to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural values and/or identity was identified as a potentially significant social impact (in the absence of mitigation). There would be an unequal distribution of the potential impacts and benefits of the proposal within the community given the spatial characteristics of these impacts and benefits, with communities adjacent to the enhancement sites (particularly vulnerable groups) experiencing a larger number of negative impacts.

Mitigation measures would seek to address the potential social impacts of the proposal and to maximise social benefits. Key responses include a proposal-specific local industry participation plan (including Indigenous participation), workforce management plan and a community health and wellbeing plan. The performance of these outcomes would be tracked through a Social Impact Management Plan. ARTC would report on the delivery of these measures to mitigate and enhance community benefits to impacted communities.

During operation, the proposal would deliver broader social benefits through indirect business and employment benefits associated with Inland Rail, such as the diversification of businesses in the area and potential to increase Indigenous participation and employment through procurement from Indigenous businesses and services. Local benefits would also be delivered through improvements to safety and accessibility across the rail corridor through

the provision of three new DDA-compliant pedestrian bridges in Albury and Wagga Wagga, and the inclusion of shared paths on the new road bridges in Wagga Wagga and Junee. However, the operation of the proposal would have some localised low to moderate adverse impacts (prior to mitigation) to health and wellbeing (primarily due to potential noise level changes at some enhancement sites), as well as impacts to community and surroundings (due to aesthetic changes associated with new bridge structures and/or the change in freight movements), and impacts to mobility and increased community severance (due to marginal increases in the frequency of level crossing closures and/or delays). A potential high impact to health and wellbeing during operation (prior to mitigation) is associated with the exacerbation of existing safety and privacy concerns at residential properties adjacent to the Cassidy Parade pedestrian bridge, given the replacement bridge would be higher and the change to the ramp connection to Brookong Avenue. Measures identified during detailed design would be put in place to address the privacy and security concerns.

In response to these potential impacts, key initiatives would include a Community Investment Program, which would explore ways with the local community to enhance aesthetic value, cultural heritage and community identity and cohesion across the social locality. A communication and engagement plan would also be implemented to build community awareness of the rail corridor's operational characteristics, including information on the likely timing of level crossing closures, likely daily train movements, and ARTC's ongoing role after construction.

Economic

During construction of the proposal, local economies would likely experience increased employment and training opportunities, with an estimated workforce of up to 770 personnel required during the peak construction period. Flow-on local and regional economic benefits would also be generated, as the proposal would create opportunities for the supply of materials and services in the regional study area. During engagement with key stakeholders, local businesses raised the importance of communication about the proposal's construction timeline to ensure they are prepared to contract to the Inland Rail program. Business chambers, Regional Development Australia committees, and councils also raised concerns that Inland Rail is not considering its program within the context of the wider regional setting and the workforce demands of the proposal will cause negative impacts to the local economy, instead of opportunity for local businesses. In response to these concerns, a workforce management plan and an industry participation plan would be prepared and implemented to carefully manage and mitigate these impacts during construction of the proposal.

The inflow of the workforce into the local area would create demand for short-term accommodation, particularly during scheduled rail possessions when works would occur concurrently in multiple enhancement sites. The accommodation requirements for the proposal would compete with accommodation demands from the tourism, local business and agriculture sectors. Wagga Wagga and Junee, in particular, would experience change during peak construction periods with a large influx of workers using short-term accommodation during the scheduled rail possessions in March and September 2024. Without mitigation, this demand would have an impact on the local economy when short-term accommodation demand is high. As outlined in Chapter 13: Social, a workforce accommodation strategy would be prepared to manage demand on local accommodation and detailed construction planning would look to scheduling opportunities to minimise the peak demand on the short-term accommodation market.

Construction would also result in temporary changes to local amenity and local transport connectivity, which may result in disruptions to local businesses (including tourism). A low, temporary, economic impact may occur for local businesses surrounding the proposal due to the temporary road closures and loss of parking. However, businesses may obtain additional income through the presence of the construction workforce, which may offset potential negative impacts.

During operation, the proposal would provide a more direct rail freight corridor, supporting the more efficient movement of intrastate and interstate freight. The proposal offers opportunities to improve the productivity of the local industry by reducing the distance between dispersed agricultural activities to processing and markets. The proposal would increase competition between road and rail freight modes, driving savings in freight costs that would benefit producers, consumers, and the regional economic catchment area. The proposal would not result in significant changes to travel times or distances by road transport, with no permanent impacts on agricultural land or significant impacts on the tourism industry.

Noise and vibration

Primary construction hours of 6 am to 6 pm Monday to Sunday and on public holidays are proposed where works would not need to occur on, or immediately adjacent to, active rail lines. These construction activities would be undertaken outside primary construction hours, as well as during rail possessions to ensure worker safety. Rail possessions are scheduled to be up to 60 hours and would work on a 24-hour rotating shift basis for the duration. Shorter rail closures would also be used comprising 5-to-12-hour windows in which train services are not scheduled.

Construction would result in exceedances of relevant criteria at numerous receivers around the proposal site. However, the potential construction noise impacts would vary between enhancement sites depending on the type and intensity of the construction activities required. The predicted noise levels also represent the worst-case scenario in which the loudest equipment is operating at the closest point to receivers. In practice, actual construction noise levels at individual receivers would be lower for most of the construction period as noise-

generating activities are undertaken at varying locations within each enhancement site. The louder and more intrusive works (such as piling or earthworks) would also typically occur during possessions and TOAs, which are usually short term with long respite periods.

Exceedance of noise criteria for all periods would occur, despite implementation of reasonable and feasible mitigation measures, particularly for works in and around urban areas. The highest noise impacts are predicted to be experienced during rail possessions, particularly in Albury and Wagga Wagga, due to the scale of works and number of nearby receivers. In most cases, the duration of the construction activities would be relatively short lived as they are constrained by rail possession duration. Further, the scheduling for rail possessions and rail closures would usually provide respite periods for sensitive receivers.

Implementation of standard and site-specific noise and vibration mitigation measures would reduce the impact on receivers as far as is reasonable and feasible. An out-of-hours work protocol would be developed to identify the process for considering, approving and managing the potential noise and vibration impacts of work outside the primary proposal construction hours. The protocol would include the implementation of appropriate management measures and communication. Measures would be aimed at pro-active communication and engagement with potentially affected receivers, provision of respite periods, and alternative accommodation for defined exceedance levels from onsite construction activities and traffic detours. Design and construction methodology responses to minimise noise and vibration impacts have also been incorporated as far as practicable, such as route selection for temporary traffic diversions to minimise the number of receivers impacted by changes in traffic noise, and the selection of construction equipment for piling works to minimise vibration impacts to the community and nearby structures.

The increase in frequency and size of freight trains, and the modifications to the rail corridor, would potentially result in operational rail noise impacts. The predicted noise levels at modelled enhancement sites during the day and night-time periods exceeded the trigger values for airborne noise at 15 sensitive receivers. No other receivers are predicted to be experience exceedances. Identification of noise mitigation would continue to be investigated during detailed design and in accordance with the Inland Rail Noise and Vibration Strategy, taking into consideration landowner preferences and, in the case of non-residential receivers, informed by further investigations of internal noise levels, building layout and building condition.

Operational rail vibration levels at sensitive receivers external to the rail corridor would comply with criteria for human amenity and buildings (structural integrity and cosmetic damage). Vibration levels at heritage-listed structures are not predicted to significantly change from the existing levels currently experienced.

The replacement of road bridges at Wagga Wagga and Junee would change road traffic noise levels given the increase in bridge height. Minor reductions are predicted for residences closer to the bridges as the raised bridge deck would improve the acoustic screening to these receivers. A small increase in road traffic noise levels would occur at properties further away from the bridges as the increased height of the bridges would increase the transmission of noise. These noise increases are predicted to be 2.1 dB or below, which is below the noise traffic criteria and is unlikely to be noticeable.

Biodiversity

The proposal is located within the existing rail corridor in areas that have been predominantly cleared. The landscape in the study area surrounding the proposal has been heavily fragmented by agricultural practices and development, with existing habitat connectivity limited to creek lines and road reserves. The condition of native vegetation in the proposal site is predominately low, with some patches of moderate condition.

The proposal would require the clearing of about 4.44 ha of native vegetation. This vegetation includes threatened ecological communities (TEC) listed under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) (BC Act) and/or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act), and areas used as foraging and breeding habitat for fauna species. The reduction in the extent of native vegetation is unlikely to threaten the persistence of any populations of native plants, vegetation or fauna communities. This is due to the location of the proposal in the existing rail corridor surrounded by a highly fragmented regional and rural landscape. It is also unlikely that an ecologically significant proportion of any regional plant populations would be located entirely within the proposal site.

The proposal would potentially require the removal of 0.03 ha of native riparian vegetation and habitat features. Instream works would also occur within two creeks mapped as Key Fish Habitat (Sandy Creek, Uranquinty and Jeralgambeth Creek at Illabo), and there is potential for indirect impacts at the Murray River due to bridge alterations. These potential impacts would be minimised by implementing the construction mitigation and management measures provided by the EIS. No significant impacts on aquatic threatened species or communities are predicted.

Existing development and land uses have created barriers of movement for some fauna species. The removal of vegetation may exacerbate fragmentation for certain species, and the operation of the proposal is likely to result in minor increases in localised fragmentation of regional wildlife patches along the creek lines and road reserves. However, the operation of the proposal is considered unlikely to result in fragmentation on a regional or landscape scale and the impacts to habitat connectivity is low with the implementation of the proposed design features and

mitigation measures. ARTC has also committed to considering regional connectivity enhancements to deliver benefits beyond the proposal site.

Measures to minimise impacts to biodiversity values have been considered throughout the development of the reference design and planning process including refining the design of construction compounds to minimise impacts to native vegetation, riparian areas, wetlands and other areas of suitable native fauna habitat as far as practicable.

Priority to minimise direct impacts to moderate condition vegetation in favour of vegetation of lower condition was taken, where possible, and construction access was designed to use existing access tracks where possible to avoid vegetation clearance. The area of direct impact would be further refined during detailed design, with the aim of reducing the amount of vegetation clearing required, as far as practicable.

ARTC would retire the biodiversity offset obligation for the proposal and this would include consideration of potential offset sites and/or opportunities to purchase biodiversity credits to offset the impacts of the proposal and/or apply the variation rules, according to the requirements for major projects under the EP&A Act, the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme, and the assessment bilateral agreement between the Australian Government and the NSW Government.

Landscape and visual

The proposal would result in temporary changes to the landscape and visual amenity of the surrounding area during construction due to the removal of vegetation, general construction activities, earthworks, lighting for night works, and the presence of large machinery and equipment such as excavators, cranes and piling rigs. The potential impacts on visual amenity of these changes would depend on the nature and intensity of the construction activity at each enhancement site at a given point during construction; however, adverse impacts would be temporary and limited to the construction period. High–moderate adverse impacts would occur at Albury Station, Edmondson Street bridge, Wagga Wagga Station, and Kemp Street bridge enhancement sites, where more substantial bridge works would occur and where areas of public open space would be temporarily disrupted.

Detailed design and construction planning will seek to further minimise the construction footprints and light spill from temporary lighting on adjacent receivers as far as reasonably practicable. Construction compounds would be located, as far as practicable, away from sensitive receivers and designed and orientated to minimise visual impacts.

Once operational, the key landscape and visual changes would be associated with the new road and pedestrian bridges. The bridges would be taller with more prominent structures, and existing vegetation would be removed to facilitate the construction of these bridges. The more frequent and larger freight trains would also be more visually prominent than those currently seen; however, these changes would be generally in character with the existing rail corridor and would not alter the use or amenity of the landscape.

The landscape and visual impacts from these new elements across most enhancement sites would generally be negligible to moderate. A high–moderate visual impact was identified at some viewpoints to the new pedestrian or road bridges at Albury (Albury Station pedestrian bridge) and Wagga Wagga (Edmondson Street bridge and Wagga Wagga Station pedestrian bridge). This impact would be mainly due to the taller structures, as well as the larger and more frequent freight trains. The design of the proposed new bridges would be sympathetic to the surrounding environment and heritage character of the area.

During detailed design, an urban design and landscape plan would be prepared by a suitably qualified consultant to provide a consistent approach to design and landscaping. This would be context-specific to ensure the design is well integrated into its surrounding environment.

Groundwater

The proposal would have limited interaction with groundwater during construction across most enhancement sites. The key potential impact to groundwater would occur where track lowering and/or excavations are proposed that intersect saturated and permanent aquifers at three enhancement sites—Riverina Highway bridge, Pearson Street bridge, and Kemp Street bridge.

During construction, dewatering at Riverina Highway bridge and Kemp Street bridge would result in an estimated take of 0.7 megalitres (ML) and 11.4 ML within one water calendar year respectively. Subject to the confirmation of predicted groundwater take during detailed design, ARTC or its contractor would obtain a relevant water access licence for the groundwater take. Due to the radius of influence on groundwater levels, distance to registered bores and groundwater dependent ecosystems and the temporary nature of any inflows, the works at the two enhancement sites would have a negligible to low risk to registered bores and groundwater dependent ecosystems, except at one water supply bore located 7.5 m away from the Kemp Street bridge enhancement site. However, significant impacts to the bore are unlikely.

At Pearson Street bridge enhancement site, the required depth of excavation would be above the monitored groundwater level and under the current climatic conditions groundwater interception and take is not expected. Under wetter climatic conditions or changed pumping conditions, potentially elevated groundwater levels may be intersected during bulk excavation. This impact could result in groundwater take; however, the duration of works at this site would be limited and any impact to groundwater dependent ecosystems or registered bores would be low.

Potential groundwater take resulting from the proposal would have a low risk of impact on the current water balance of the Billabong Creek alluvial, Wagga Wagga alluvial, or Lachlan Fold Belt Murray–Darling Basin groundwater sources. Further groundwater investigations and monitoring would inform design and construction methodology to further reduce and avoid impacts to groundwater resources during construction. The quality of groundwater taken during excavation works would be assessed for the suitability for re-use during construction (or by others) or disposed of accordingly.

Groundwater is not predicted to be impacted during operation of the proposal given its depth and because the operational use as a rail corridor is comparable to existing land use activities. There remains a low to moderate risk of groundwater rising to the elevation of the track and potentially entering the surface water drainage network (known as groundwater seepage) at the Pearson Street bridge enhancement site under wetter climatic conditions. As any such seepage would be intermittent and limited in extent, impacts to GDEs and registered water supply bores in the vicinity of this enhancement site is assessed as low. The proposal has been designed to accommodate this potential seepage.

The assessment of the proposal's impacts on aquifers and GDEs in regard to the minimal impact considerations of the NSW Aquifer Interference Policy (Department of Primary Industries (DPI), 2012a) indicates the proposal complies with Level 1 criteria, which considers the potential impacts acceptable.

Soils and contamination

Construction would temporarily expose the natural ground surface and sub-surface through the removal of vegetation, overlying structures (such as existing roads) and excavation. Some sites contain dispersive soils or soils prone to high erosion hazard, including Table Top Yard clearances, Billy Hughes bridge, Culcairn pedestrian bridge and Culcairn Yard clearances, The Rock Yard clearances, Pearson Street bridge, Wagga Wagga Station and surrounds, and enhancement sites within the Junee precinct. The potential for erosion impacts would be minimised by implementing standard best-practice soil erosion control measures during construction.

The proposal site is in an area described as having low probability of acid sulfate soil, with the exception of the Murray River Bridge enhancement site where there are sediments below the water table that have a 'high probability' of acid sulfate soil occurring. The proposal would not disturb sediments in the river. Salinity is known to occur in the proposal site and excavations at four locations along the proposal site could lead to increased salinity risk; further investigations would be carried out during detailed design to inform any required responses to this risk.

A soil and water sub-plan would be developed to manage potential soil and water quality impacts during construction, including potential impacts associated with stockpile management, salinity and acid sulfate soil. Further assessment would be completed at enhancement sites where excavation is required and the presence of acid sulfate soil or saline soils is known or suspected.

The proposal is located within an existing rail corridor, which has a general level of risk associated with contamination from historical development and activities associated with its operation. Based on the intensity of historical activities observed within the rail corridor, including the presence of operational facilities, and development in the surrounding area, enhancement sites within and surrounding Albury Station and Wagga Wagga Station have a higher likelihood of contamination being present. Equally, enhancement sites with more extensive excavation proposed (both area and depth), including Riverina Highway bridge, Billy Hughes bridge, Pearson Street bridge and Kemp Street bridge enhancement sites, may also have a higher likelihood for contamination to be encountered through the proposal.

For these enhancement sites, further investigation would be carried out to inform detailed design, and the subsequent management and classification of the excavated material during construction in the contamination and hazardous materials sub-plan. Where the risk of asbestos and/or lead-paint has been identified, further assessment would be required prior to construction and, potentially, additional management or remediation. Hazardous materials would be handled and disposed of in accordance with relevant standards.

Operation is not likely to result in any significant impacts on soils, topography or geology. The risk of soil erosion during operation would be minimal, as all areas impacted during construction would be sealed or rehabilitated, and landscaped to prevent soil erosion. All maintenance activities would continue to be undertaken in accordance with ARTC's standard operating procedures.

Hydrology, flooding and water quality

The proposal site crosses a number of watercourses within the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchments. The majority of watercourses crossed by the proposal are non-perennial, with water ceasing to flow for weeks or months at a time (intermittent watercourses) or flowing only for short durations following rainfall (ephemeral watercourses). There is limited water quality data available for watercourses within the proposal site; however, given the high proportion of land developed for rail infrastructure, urban and agricultural purposes, it is considered likely that runoff from these areas contributes to degradation of water quality.

During construction there is potential for activities associated with the construction of new culverts and a temporary creek crossing to temporarily disturb watercourses and reduce water quality in downstream catchments if not managed appropriately. Once operational, the proposal would not divert or alter flow regimes in downstream

receivers as the works have been designed to mimic the existing drainage and surface water flow conditions at the enhancement sites. As there are no significant changes to hydrologic regimes downstream of the enhancement sites in the operational phase, impacts are not predicted on the water balance or water availability within the downstream catchments.

The proposal site is partially located on flood-prone land. During construction there is potential for inundation of the proposal site affecting construction activities and infrastructure, including earthworks, compounds and stockpiles. This could pose a risk to construction workers and the public, and result in the mobilisation of construction materials in flood waters. Establishment of temporary construction infrastructure also has the potential to temporarily affect flooding behaviour; however, these impacts would be manageable with the implementation of mitigation measures.

Drainage works have been designed to mimic or improve the existing drainage, hydrology, flooding conditions and associated water quality impacts, where possible, to minimise the operational impacts of the proposal. During operation, there would be minor changes to flood conditions, overland flows and afflux conditions where the vertical alignment of existing track has been altered. In many cases, changes would result in minor improvements to existing rail flood immunity; however, where track lowering is proposed, the design would provide flood immunity in the 1 per cent annual exceedance probability (AEP) event. Where flood storage is predicted to be reduced as a result of operational infrastructure, impacts are predicted to be minor to negligible, and no houses or other sensitive properties would become affected by flooding. The proposal is expected to satisfy the quantitative design limits (QDLs) (or impact criteria) adopted for the proposal by Inland Rail, including at classified roads managed by Transport for NSW (TfNSW). An afflux increase in an industrial area downstream of the Wagga Wagga Yard clearances enhancement site was identified; however, it is expected to be attenuated by including additional drainage and topography data in the flood model for the area, supplemented by discharge controls from the Wagga Wagga Yard if necessary. Further modelling would be completed during detailed design to confirm drainage at this location and compliance with the QDLs. Overall, the proposal would not result in any broad-scale changes in flood behaviour.

Other issues

Other issues with fewer substantial impacts were assessed in this EIS, including:

- ▶ **Aboriginal heritage:** The proposal has been designed and refined to avoid and minimise impacts on Aboriginal heritage, including the avoidance of direct impacts on two isolated stone artefacts at Yerong Creek and Olympic Highway underbridge enhancement sites, and restrictions to the use of Townsend Street at the Murray River bridge enhancement site to avoid impacts to any intact archaeological deposits. Engagement with Registered Aboriginal Parties has identified that sensitive environments in, or in the general locality of, some enhancement sites have cultural value. Mitigation measures would manage any potential indirect impacts on these sensitive environments.

Direct and indirect impacts to the cultural environment by ongoing operation are not predicted. While the proposal would enable the use of double-stacked container trains, this use would remain within the existing context of the landscape (being a rail corridor) and indirect impacts on watercourses and wetlands with cultural value from the operation of the proposal is negligible.

- ▶ **Air quality:** During construction, the proposal has the potential to generate dust emissions from construction works and the movement of construction vehicles. Without mitigation, this could potentially result in visible dust emissions, annoyance to sensitive receivers due to dust deposition and elevated airborne particulate matter concentrations. Potential dust impacts would be temporary and would be substantially reduced with the implementation of standard mitigation measures.

During operation, the increase in diesel-operated freight trains using the corridor has the potential to increase levels of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. The air quality impact assessment considered the potential increases and concluded that the emissions are expected to be below the relevant impact assessment criteria.

- ▶ **Waste and resource management:** The main wastes generated during construction include spoil (excavated material), vegetation, demolition waste and ballast. Earthwork requirements would be subject to further refinement during detailed design to minimise the final volume of spoil as far as practicable, and options to reuse spoil and ballast would be investigated prior to construction. Construction waste generation would not have a significant impact on the environment with the implementation of the Waste Management Sub-plan for the proposal, which would consider waste types, estimated quantities for management, excavated material management, and mitigation strategies, as well as contingencies for any unexpected waste volumes that may arise throughout construction of the proposal.

Operational waste, including general waste streams and waste generated from track maintenance procedures, would be managed in accordance with ARTC's existing operational controls, and the impact is expected to be minimal.

- ▶ **Hazards:** Potential hazards during construction would be temporary and associated with the use of low volumes of dangerous goods and hazardous substances, handling of contaminated soil and hazardous wastes, risk of

structural damage and bushfire risks. Emergency and incident response plans and procedures would be developed and implemented, including flood and bushfire risk.

The hazards associated with the proposal site would generally remain the same during continued operation of the rail corridor. Potential operational impacts would be managed by undertaking the design with an appropriate emphasis on safety according to relevant design standards and requirements.

- ▶ **Sustainability:** The proposal is pursuing an Infrastructure Sustainability Council rating of 'excellent'. Sustainability initiatives have been embedded into the development of the proposal and additional initiatives would be considered during the detailed design, construction or operational phases of the proposal. This would be guided by a Sustainability Management Plan.
- ▶ **Climate change risk adaptation and greenhouse gas (GHG):** Climate change risks, opportunities and adaptations have been considered during the development of the proposal. Further consideration of responses to climate change risks would be undertaken during detailed design. This would be informed by the Sustainability Management Plan. The preliminary GHG assessment of Scope 1 sources identified a small increase in GHG emissions as a result of the proposal. However, the Inland Rail program is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 750,000 tonnes per year from 2050 and bring a net GHG emission improvement by moving a higher proportion of freight from road to rail.
- ▶ The potential for cumulative impacts resulting from the interaction of the proposal with other projects, either existing or proposed, in the surrounding area is considered low. During construction there could be cumulative impacts associated with biodiversity, non-Aboriginal, noise, traffic and amenity. Potential cumulative impacts on short-term accommodation due to the concurrent construction of the proposal and Illabo to Stockinbingal would be managed through the workforce accommodation strategy for the Inland Rail program of works. There are no predicted cumulative impacts during operation.

Justification of proposal

The proposal involves enhancement works to structures and sections of track between Albury and Illabo, and the continued operation of the Main South Line as part of the Inland Rail program. The proposal supports the safe running of double-stacked freight trains and is justified in terms of its strategic need and anticipated benefits.

This EIS has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 5.2 of the EP&A Act and addresses the SEARs. It also considers the issues raised by the community and stakeholders during the development of the proposal.

A proposal of this scale would inevitably have some impacts on the local environment and community, particularly during construction and as a result of undertaking enhancement works along an existing rail corridor. As described in this EIS, the proposal would incorporate environmental management and design features to ensure that potential impacts are managed and mitigated as far as practicable.

The majority of the potential construction-related impacts would be effectively mitigated by the implementation of construction management, including the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this EIS. The potential remains for residual impacts, particularly as a result of construction noise at enhancement sites, the traffic detours at Wagga Wagga and Junee, and changes to open space at Junee.

The residual impacts of the proposal are outweighed by the long-term benefits, including:

- ▶ enable Inland Rail to operate by making it possible for double-stacked freight trains to operate between Albury and Illabo
- ▶ provide improved accessibility across the rail corridor in Albury, Wagga Wagga and Junee through the provision of three new DDA-compliant pedestrian bridges and the inclusion of shared paths on the new road bridges
- ▶ job creation during construction and flow-on benefits to the local economies around the enhancement sites.

The proposal, as part of Inland Rail, is needed to respond to the growth in demand for freight transport, and to address existing freight capacity and infrastructure issues. Inland Rail would provide the following key benefits:

- ▶ boost the Australian economy
- ▶ job creation
- ▶ provide better access to and from our regional markets
- ▶ offer better transit time and reliability for freight transport
- ▶ improve road safety by removing more trucks from the road network.

The design and the construction methodology would continue to be developed with the objective of further minimising potential impacts, taking into account the input of stakeholders and the community. The potential residual construction and operational impacts of the proposal are considered manageable with the implementation of the proposed mitigation and management measures.