

CHAPTER 01

Introduction

ALBURY TO ILLABO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

ARTC

INLAND
RAIL
An Australian Government Initiative

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Australian Government has committed to delivering 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 would enhance Australia's existing national rail network and serve the interstate freight market.

The Inland Rail route, which is about 1,700 kilometres (km) long, would involve:

- ▶ using the existing interstate rail line through Victoria and southern NSW
- ▶ upgrading about 400 km of existing track, mainly in western NSW
- ▶ providing about 600 km of new track in northern NSW and South East Queensland.

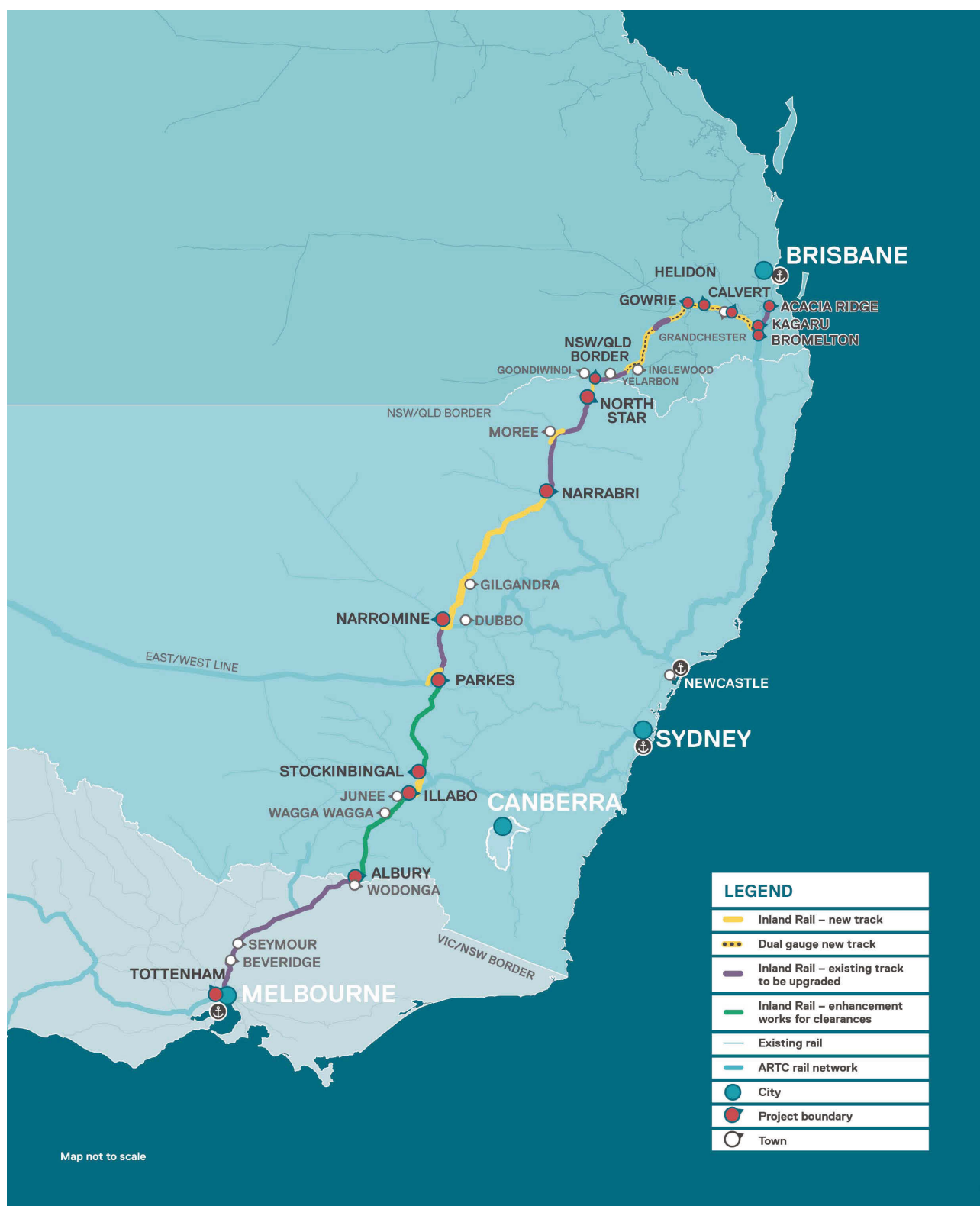
Inland Rail has been divided into 13 projects, seven of which are located in NSW. Each of these projects can be delivered and operated independently with tie-in points to the existing railway. An overview of Inland Rail is shown in Figure 1-1.

Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd (ARTC) (the proponent) developed a program to deliver Inland Rail by 2027. ARTC was created after the Australian Government and state governments agreed in 1997 to the formation of a 'one-stop shop' for all operators seeking access to the national interstate rail network. Across its network, ARTC is responsible for:

- ▶ selling access to train operators
- ▶ developing new business
- ▶ capital investment in the corridors
- ▶ managing the network
- ▶ infrastructure maintenance.

Further information on ARTC and Inland Rail can be found at artc.com.au and inlandrail.com.au.

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) relates to the Albury to Illabo (A2I) section of the Inland Rail program (the proposal).



1.2 The proposal

The proponent is seeking approval to carry out enhancement works to structures and sections of track along 185 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 6.5 m high. The proposal is Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) and is subject to approval by the NSW Minister for Planning under Division 5.2, Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act).

Enhancement works are required to provide the increased vertical and horizontal clearances required for double-stacked freight trains. Works would include track realignment, lowering and/or modification within the existing rail corridor, modification, removal or replacement of bridge structures (rail, road and/or pedestrian bridges), raising or replacing signal gantries, level crossing modifications and other associated works.

As the alignment is presently operational, the proposal does not extend to those existing sections of the alignment where no works are required.

The possible future use of the railway between Albury and Illabo by freight trains up to 3,600 m long would be subject to separate assessment.

1.2.1 Location

The proposal is generally within the existing rail corridor extending from the town of Albury on the Victorian–NSW border to around 3 km to the north-east of Illabo. The alignment passes through two major regional towns—Albury and Wagga Wagga in NSW—and several smaller regional towns. Works are proposed at 24 locations along the Main South Line corridor, described as ‘enhancement sites’. The name and location of these enhancement sites are identified in Figure 1-2.

1.2.2 Key features

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 allow 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 roads closures to undertake works on road bridges and level crossings
- ▶ other ancillary works.

No additional works would be required outside the enhancement sites identified in Figure 1-2 as they meet the clearance requirement for the Inland Rail program.



Figure 1-2 Enhancement sites of the proposal

Data Sources: ARTC, NSWSS

1.2.3 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 trains can be up to 1,800 m long.

The proposal would enable the use of double-stacked trains along its entire length. Inland Rail would operate 24-hours per day and would initially accommodate double-stacked freight trains up to 6.5 m high and up to 1,800 m in length. The possible future use of the railway between Albury and Illabo by freight trains up to 3,600 m long would be subject to separate assessment. Freight train speeds would range from 60 km per hour (km/h) to 115 km/h, which is consistent with current train speeds.

The average number of freight trains movements between Albury and Illabo varies. Currently there is an average of up to 12 movements per day. In 2025, this would increase to up to 18 freight trains per day, further increasing up to 20 freight trains per day by 2040.

ARTC would continue to maintain the line. This would typically involve 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 works and schedules are not proposed to change as a result of the proposal and would continue in accordance with the existing Environmental Protection Licence which applies to the rail corridor (EPL 3142).

Further information on the construction and operation of the proposal is in Chapter 7: Proposal features and operation and Chapter 8: Construction of the proposal.

1.2.4 Timing

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.

The proposal would be fully operational in 2025 with enhancement sites progressively commissioned on completion of construction. Inland Rail as a whole would be operational once all 13 sections are complete, which is estimated to be in 2027.

1.2.5 Related development

As described in section 1.1, the proposal forms part of a broader Inland Rail program that is planned to be operational by 2027. The adjoining sections of the Inland Rail program are:

- ▶ **Tottenham to Albury (Victoria) (T2A).** This staged project would upgrade 305 km of existing rail corridor between the Victoria–NSW border at Albury and Melbourne. Travelling north, the project starts on the outskirts of Melbourne and follows the existing rail corridor to Wodonga. Stage 1 (Beveridge to Albury) consists of discrete enhancement works. The closest enhancement works to Albury to Illabo are in Barnawartha North approximately 15 km south-west of Albury. Construction of Stage 1 is expected to commence in early 2023. Investigations are continuing for Stage 2 (Tottenham to Beveridge).
- ▶ **Illabo to Stockinbingal (I2S).** This project involves construction and operation of new rail and associated facilities. The northern end of the proposal would connect with I2S north east of Illabo, NSW. Subject to planning approval, construction is expected to commence in mid-2023.

A number of utility works (adjustment, relocation or replacement of existing utilities) would also be carried out to accommodate the proposal and would be subject to separate approvals. These works would be completed prior to the start of construction of the proposal (refer to Chapter 8: Construction of the proposal, section 8.9).

1.3 Objectives of the proposal and Inland Rail

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 to 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.

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 and bulk rail freight
- ▶ increase in 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.

1.4 EIS purpose and structure

This EIS supports an application for approval of the proposal under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act. It addresses the requirements of Part 8 Division 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 and the environmental assessment requirements for the proposal issued October 2020 (refer to Appendix A: Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements). Preparation of the EIS also has had regard to the *State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines* (DPIE, 2021c).

The structure and content of the EIS is outlined in Table 1-1.

TABLE 1-1 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE EIS

Chapter	Description
Chapter 1	Introduction Provides a background to the proposal and an overview of the key features of the proposal. The chapter also outlines the overall structure and content of the EIS.
Chapter 2	Strategic context and need Provides an overview of the strategic context and need for the proposal.
Chapter 3	Location and setting Provides a description of the regional setting and the existing environment of the proposal site and surrounding area.
Chapter 4	Statutory context Provides an overview of the statutory context for the proposal and the approval requirements.
Chapter 5	Engagement Provides a summary of the consultation that occurred during the development of the proposal and environmental assessment process, how it was incorporated into the design and planning, and the consultation proposed during public exhibition, detailed design, and delivery.
Chapter 6	Alternatives and proposal options Provides a summary of the alternatives to the proposal, the options considered during development of the concept design and construction methodology for the proposal, including the approach to avoiding or minimising impacts and the selection of the preferred option.
Chapter 7	Proposal features and operation Provides a description of the proposal features and operation, design features and infrastructure proposed, operation, maintenance, and other related information.
Chapter 8	Construction of the proposal Provides an indicative description of the likely construction process and activities.
Chapters 9 to 26	Impact assessment Describes the results of the assessment of key environmental issues identified by the SEARs, including information on the existing environment, potential construction and operation impacts, and the proposed approach to mitigation and management.
Chapter 27	Approach to mitigation and management Provides a consolidated summary of the key potential impacts and residual risks, a description of the proposed approach to environmental management, a compilation of the mitigation measures and performance outcomes, proposal uncertainties and the proposed approach to the design refinements during future stages.
Chapter 28	Justification of the proposal Provides a summary of the proposal and justification for the proposal, having regard to biophysical, economic and social considerations.
Chapter 29	References Provides a list of references used to inform the EIS.

Chapter	Description
Appendices	
Appendix A	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
Appendix B	Strategic planning review
Appendix C	Statutory compliance
Appendix D	Utilities management framework
Appendix E	Environmental risk assessment
Appendix F	Albury to Illabo Engagement Report
Appendix G	Preliminary land requirements
Appendix H	Construction Environmental Management Plan outline
Appendix I	Rapid Assessment Framework checklist
Technical papers	
	Technical paper 1: Transport and traffic
	Technical paper 2: Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report
	Technical paper 3: Non-Aboriginal heritage
	Technical paper 4: Social
	Technical paper 5: Economic
	Technical paper 6: Noise and vibration (non-rail)
	Technical paper 7: Operational noise and vibration (rail)
	Technical paper 8: Biodiversity development assessment report
	Technical paper 9: Aquatic biodiversity impact assessment
	Technical paper 10: Landscape and visual
	Technical paper 11: Hydrology, flooding, and water quality
	Technical paper 12: Groundwater
	Technical paper 13: Contamination
	Technical paper 14: Air quality