

APPENDIX

INLAND
RAIL 

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Consistency with Relevant Planning Strategies Technical Report

NORTH STAR TO NSW/QUEENSLAND BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

ARTC

The Australian Government is delivering
Inland Rail through the Australian
Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), in
partnership with the private sector.

Inland Rail North Star to NSW/QLD Border

Appendix C: Consistency with
relevant planning strategies

Australian Rail Track Corporation

Reference: 2700

Document Number:
2-0001-270-EAP-10-RP-0402

Revision: 0

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1 Outline

The purpose of this appendix is to demonstrate that the proposal, as part of the wider Inland Rail program, is consistent with the relevant National, State and regional planning strategies.

2 National strategies

2.1 Australian Infrastructure Plan

The Australian Infrastructure Plan (Infrastructure Australia 2019) sets out the infrastructure challenges and opportunities that Australia faces over the next 15 years and the solutions required. The Plan is an adopted Government policy informed by the Northern Australia Audit and the Australian Infrastructure Audit, which provide a comprehensive review of existing and required infrastructure over the coming decades.

The Plan has four main themes:

- Productive cities, productive regions
- Efficient infrastructure markets
- Sustainable and equitable infrastructure
- Better decisions and better delivery.

Inland Rail is referenced in relation to the first theme. The Plan states that “the efficient movement of freight into, out of, and across Australia is critical to the nation’s ongoing productivity growth and competitiveness”. It recognises that the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor is one of the most important and busiest freight routes in Australia, supporting key population, production, and employment precincts. The Plan states that Inland Rail would improve the efficiency of freight moving between Melbourne and Brisbane, as it would bypass the Sydney metropolitan area.

As part of the Australian Infrastructure Plan, the Infrastructure Priority List is designed to give guidance to decision makers, visibility to industry, and transparency for the community. It is a ‘rolling’ list which will be updated periodically as proposals move through stages of development and delivery, and to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. Inland Rail is included as a priority project on the September 2019 Infrastructure Priority List in the ‘national connectivity’ category. It is identified in the ‘medium term (5-10 years)’ proposed delivery timeframe to address ‘freight connectivity Melbourne and Brisbane’.

2.2 State of Australian Cities 2014 – 2015

Since 2010, the State of Australian Cities reports have examined the progress being made in our major cities. The reports bring together current research and data to present a comprehensive picture of how Australia’s cities are evolving, to strengthen the knowledge base used to develop policy. The State of Australian Cities 2014-2015 report (Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development 2015) observed that there is more demand for transport in Australia, including freight, than ever before.

Further growth in population, transport passengers, and freight demands is forecasted. Findings of the report identify the challenges that policy makers will need to respond to in order to see continued progress in major cities. Recognised key challenges for policy makers include the potential conflicts between the usability of cities with the utility and long-term capacity of freight hubs, ports, airports, and the movement of goods and people in cities. The interstate freight task is forecasted to grow significantly in the coming decades, with resultant pressure on to transport infrastructure. The report notes that the issues associated with this will be particularly felt in the cities where many freight movements originate and terminate, as there are already capacity constraints experienced when the movement of freight conflicts with the transport of people on roads and rail.

The report notes that all levels of government and industry have agreed on the need to apply a national focus and effort to deliver a streamlined, integrated and multimodal transport and logistics system, capable of efficiently moving freight throughout Australia.

Inland Rail provides a response to some of the issues raised in this report, as it aims to:

- Provide a step-change improvement in rail service quality in the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor to deliver a freight rail service on the east coast that is competitive with road
- Improve road safety, ease congestion and reduce environmental impacts by moving freight from road to rail
- Bypass bottlenecks on the congested metropolitan rail networks on the east coast, and free up train paths for other services on the coastal route.

2.3 Urban Transport Strategy

The Urban Transport Strategy (Infrastructure Australia 2013), National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy (Transport and Infrastructure Council 2019), and the National Ports Strategy (Infrastructure Australia 2011) form the key components of strategic planning for transport in Australia.

Relevant to Inland Rail, the Urban Transport Strategy recognises that some of Australia's public transport sub-systems influence the performance of urban roads and the national freight systems. The Strategy notes that urban transport strongly affects national productivity, with road congestion impacting on national productivity and economic activity.

One of the aims of the Strategy is to promote the best use of capacity on high use roads. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including by removing freight from urban roads, and prioritising freight on the national freight network.

The Strategy aims to be mutually supportive of the National Ports Strategy and National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy. The basis for this mutual support is the national transport policy framework. The framework's objectives relate to: efficient movement of people and goods; safety; social inclusion; protection of environment and health; integration with urban and regional planning; transparency in funding and charging.

Inland Rail is consistent with this Strategy as it aims to:

- Improve road safety, ease congestion and reduce environmental impacts by moving freight from road to rail
- Bypass bottlenecks on the congested metropolitan rail networks on the east coast, and free up train paths for other services on the coastal route.

2.4 National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy

The Transport and Infrastructure Council endorsed the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and National Action Plan (Transport and Infrastructure Council 2019) in August 2019 to position Australia to meet its emerging freight and supply chain challenges.

The Strategy and Action Plan set an agenda for integrated well-planned government and industry action across freight systems and infrastructure work across state and territory borders, which will enable freight to be delivered to wherever it is required across Australia.

The Strategy commits to national action in four critical areas:

- Smarter and targeted infrastructure
- Enable improved supply chain efficiency
- Better planning, coordination and regulation
- Better freight location and performance data.

The Action Plan identifies Inland Rail as a key project for improving freight access through metropolitan areas and providing infrastructure to connect regions and remote areas to markets.

The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and Action Plan builds on the:

- 2012 National Land Freight Strategy (Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure 2013)
 - The National Land Freight Strategy is a partnership between Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments and industry to deliver a streamlined, integrated and multimodal freight transport and logistics system, capable of efficiently moving freight throughout Australia. Inland Rail is included on a map of key freight routes which cater to the Strategy's emphasis on potential future freight flows, freight (vehicle) connectivity, ports, and settlements.
- 2011 National Ports Strategy (refer Section 2.5)
- 2016 Australian Infrastructure Plan (refer Section 2.1)
- 2018 Inquiry into National Freight and Supply Chain Priorities
 - The Inquiry into National Freight and Supply Chain Priorities was commissioned by the Australian Government to examine import-export supply chains, inter/intra state supply chains, urban supply chains and supply chain integration, which included resource and agricultural freight and regional and remote freight. The Inquiry report highlights that freight is essential to Australia's continued well-being and national prosperity, and urges a national approach by all tiers of government to meet increasing freight demand in the future.

On 6 April 2019 the Australian Government published *Delivering on Freight*, which showcases the Australian Government's contribution to the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy.

Among other things, *Delivering on Freight* commits to improving heavy vehicle access to local roads, improving availability and sharing of freight data and investing to address pinch points in key freight corridors. Inland Rail is identified as a key project facilitating the flow of freight, as well as maximising local (including Indigenous) employment and supply chain outcomes.

2.5 National Ports Strategy

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the National Ports Strategy (Infrastructure Australia and National Transport Commission 2011) in July 2012 as part of a collaborative approach to the future development and planning of Australia's port and freight infrastructure. The Strategy was jointly authored by Infrastructure Australia and the National Transport Commission following extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders.

The National Ports Strategy covers both bulk commodity ports and container ports, identifying:

- The most effective regulatory and governance frameworks
- Ways to improve land planning and corridor preservation
- The future infrastructure requirements of Australia's ports, including road and rail links.

The Strategy identifies infrastructure related challenges and protecting port and land transport functionality where there is surrounding urban development is a critical challenge and notes that there are major efficiency implications for Australia if significant improvements are not made to ports and related landside road and rail systems over the coming decades.

Inland Rail is consistent with the National Ports Strategy as it would enhance functionality and connect key production areas in Queensland, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria with existing rail networks that service export ports in Brisbane and Melbourne.

2.6 Newell Highway Corridor Strategy

The Newell Highway Corridor Strategy (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development 2019) was commissioned by the Australian Government in January 2019 and published in June 2019. The Strategy documents the approach and findings for arriving at an evidence-based 10-year investment roadmap to ensure that the corridor continues to serve the needs of its users into the long term. Of particular importance is the interdependency with the Inland Rail program in delivering efficient outcomes in the movement of regional freight and reducing costs for regional supply chains as well as challenges such as road safety and flooding.

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Support regional growth and development and the needs of the communities along the corridor
- Support economic growth by producing efficient access and ensuring road freight has effective connections
- Consider land use and multi-modal infrastructure planning more holistically and ensure that overall transport system is efficient, well connected and robust
- Prioritise safety for all users
- Consider long-term environmental concerns through the development and delivery process, such as increasing resilience to significant weather events and supporting sustainability
- Maintain awareness of technological developments and embrace new technologies where feasible.

The Strategy builds on the NSW Government's Newell Highway Corridor Strategy, which was published in 2015 (refer Section 3.2).

3 State strategies

3.1 State Priorities: NSW Making it Happen

On 14 September 2015 the NSW Premier announced 30 priorities for the state, to grow the economy, deliver infrastructure, protect the vulnerable, and improve health, education and public services across NSW. These consist of 12 'Premier's Priorities' and 18 'State Priorities'. Collectively, these replace NSW 2021 as the new state plan. The transport priority relevant to the Inland Rail program include the Premier's priority, 'building infrastructure', and State priority 'improving road travel reliability'.

Subsequent to the announcement of these priorities, a Making it Happen in the Regions: Regional Development Framework (Department of Industry 2017) was developed to provide for better coordination, decision making and effort on the ground.

The objectives of the Framework are to:

- Provide quality services and infrastructure in regional NSW – ensuring a baseline set of services across regional NSW
- Align efforts to support growing regional centres, acknowledging the needs of areas with strong growth in population, jobs or both
- Identify and activate economic potential by looking across regional NSW for opportunities to change the economic outlook and activate local economies.

Inland Rail is consistent with the Framework which aims to fast track infrastructure projects and invest in regional freight corridors to provide quality services and infrastructure in regional NSW.

3.2 Newell Highway Corridor Strategy

The Newell Highway Corridor Strategy (Transport for NSW 2015) sets out the objectives, current performance, and issues in managing the Newell Highway corridor over the long term. A number of significant intermodal freight hubs are located along the Newell Highway corridor and the NSW government aims to support the Newell Highway corridor hubs by looking at improving inland rail access.

The Strategy details a series of safety, asset and traffic actions to meet the current and future issues along the highway and notes that:

- The Newell Highway currently provides the major inland freight route between Queensland and Victoria, and connects numerous regional centres and communities along its 1,060 kilometre length
- The Newell Highway serves as a key economic link to domestic and export markets for agricultural products from the Central West, and interstate road freight between Queensland and Victoria
- Traffic volumes along the Newell Highway vary significantly, from around 1,200 to 4,000 vehicles per day in rural areas. Traffic volumes along the Newell Highway increase substantially within the urban areas (such as Parkes, Dubbo, Narrabri and Moree). In urban areas, average daily traffic volumes can exceed 20,000 vehicles a day.
- The Newell Highway experiences high levels of heavy vehicle use, with around 26 to 52 per cent of daily traffic made up of heavy vehicles, depending on the location. Relative use of heavy vehicles is highest to the north between Narrabri and Boggabilla, with up to 1,500 heavy vehicles per day near the Queensland border, and rural sections around Narrandera.
- A number of significant intermodal freight hubs are located along and around the Newell Highway, including major hubs at Tocomwal, Forbes, Parkes, Dubbo, Narrabri, and Moree. The NSW government aims to support these hubs by improving inland rail access and supporting the road connections.

Consistent with the Strategy aiming to improve freight productivity and efficiency, Inland Rail supports north-south freight movement between the communities of the Central West, along with interstate movements between Victoria, NSW and Queensland. It would also address some of the significant intermodal freight hubs noted by the Strategy.

3.3 NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038

The State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038 (NSW Government 2018) is a 20-year infrastructure investment plan for the NSW Government that places strategic fit and economic merit at the centre of investment decisions. The Strategy assesses infrastructure problems and solutions, and provides recommendations to best grow the State's economy, enhance productivity and improve living standards for NSW.

To inform the State Infrastructure Strategy, Infrastructure NSW has undertaken a location-based assessment of industry strengths, labour patterns, socio-demographic trends, current infrastructure challenges and future visions for jobs and growth. This assessment draws on land use plans and economic development strategies developed by other NSW Government agencies.

Within Regional NSW, the NSW Government has set a new vision for the 'hub and spoke' model, designed to provide equitable, better and more efficient services to communities across the state through a connected network of regional centres. The Government has identified 37 key economic regions that typically have a large town at their centre (a hub) and several interconnected smaller centres (spokes). All rely on their connections to markets and suppliers through key freight and service exchange routes.

Of relevance to the proposal is that part of the Strategy's 'infrastructure response' for Regional NSW is to:

- Improve transport connections to key markets, especially east-west
- Improve access to international gateways and manage them for future growth
- Provide connections to and from the proposed Inland Rail
- Support regional hubs to act as effective centres serving their surrounding regional populations.

Consistent with the Strategy the Inland Rail program supports improving transport connections to key markets and access to international gateways through connecting key production areas and providing direct freight connectivity between Melbourne – Brisbane. Inland Rail will also act as an enabler for regional economic development along the Inland Rail corridor.

3.4 NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023

The NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023 builds on the 2013 Freight and Ports Strategy; it is a call to action for government and industry to collaborate on clear initiatives and targets to make the NSW freight task more efficient and safe so NSW can continue to move and grow. The Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023 is aligned with NSW Regional Plans (refer Section 4) and the NSW State Infrastructure Strategy (refer Section 3.3).

The Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023 includes over 70 initiatives to be delivered by 2023, ranging from infrastructure investment to trials of new technologies. These initiatives are focused on achieving five key objectives: economic growth; efficiency, connectivity and access; capacity; safety; and sustainability.

To address capacity constraints on the State's freight network, the NSW Government will address road congestion, rail freight capacity and protect land needed for vital freight and logistics operations. This includes making target improvements to the NSW rail network and supporting the Inland Rail program.

Consistent with the Strategy the Inland Rail program aims to improve rail freight access and flows by addressing capacity constraints on existing networks through separating passenger and freight movement on the rail network.

3.5 NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012 – 2021

The NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-2021 (Transport for NSW 2012) sets the direction for road safety in NSW for the next seven years. The NSW Government is committed to reducing road fatalities to at least 4.3 per 100,000 people by 2016, together with at least a 30 per cent reduction in fatalities and serious injuries by 2021.

The Strategy notes that heavy trucks are often involved in serious road accidents in NSW. While they represent only 2.2 per cent of registered motor vehicles and seven per cent of all motor vehicle travel, heavy trucks were involved in 17 per cent of fatalities on NSW roads. Nearly 30 per cent of fatal heavy vehicle crashes involved heavy vehicles from interstate.

The Inland Rail program contributes to the Strategy as it moves freight from road to rail which has the potential to improve road safety as a result of moving heavy vehicles off roads.

3.6 NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056

The NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056 (Transport for NSW 2018) sets the 40-year vision, directions and outcomes framework for customer mobility in NSW, which will guide transport investment over the longer term. It will be delivered through the Regional NSW Service and Infrastructure Plan and Greater Sydney Service and Infrastructure Plan as well as a series of supporting plans. The Strategy is an update of NSW's Long Term Transport Master Plan (Transport for NSW 2012), which recognised the rapid growth in freight demand across NSW, and that the NSW freight network is a critical part of the national freight network and noted issues associated with sharing infrastructure between freight and passenger journeys, and the negative impacts associated with moving ever-increasing volumes of freight around NSW.

The Strategy includes 'future transport outcomes' that are relevant to the proposal including:

- The appropriate movement and place balance is established enabling people and goods to move efficiently through the network whilst ensuring local access and vibrant places
- Economic development is enabled by regional transport services and infrastructure

- Efficient and reliable freight journeys supported by 24/7 rail access between key freight precincts with convenient access to centres.

The Strategy aims to support the Inland Rail program to optimise the movement of freight in NSW through efficient links to ports and economically sustainable freight hubs.

4 Regional and local strategies

4.1 NSW Central West Freight Study

The Central West Freight Study (Regional Development Australia Central West 2014) documents the freight task in the Central West region, in terms of net tonnes transported via road, rail and air. It highlights constraints and opportunities, considers possible network improvements, and provides guidance on the benefits to the region of these improvements.

Relevant to the proposal, the study notes that Inland Rail is strongly supported, and that it meets the strategic merit test applied by the study. The study notes that Inland Rail would:

- Provide an opportunity for regional businesses to access Melbourne and Brisbane markets and export ports, as well as other regional nodes
- Provide a viable alternative for freight travelling along the Newell Highway
- Unlock significant value in the supply chain, open up new markets to freight users across the regional, and provide significant economic benefits to the region and the broader NSW economy.

4.2 Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan

The Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan (Transport for NSW 2018) is the NSW Government's blueprint for transport in regional NSW from now until 2056 and support the NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056 (refer Section 3.6). The Plan outlines the vision and customer outcomes that the government will use to go about its detailed transport planning in each region and also support its future decision making.

The Plan identifies that Inland Rail provides opportunities to establish intermodal hubs along its alignment through inland NSW and connections from the Parkes to the east and increase north-south freight movements facilitated by both Inland Rail and the Newell Highway.

The key initiatives for investigation in the Plan relevant to the proposal include:

- Rail and road connections to Inland Rail
- New intermodal facilities associated with Inland Rail.

4.3 Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW

The Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW (DTIRIS 2015), provides the framework for driving economic growth in regional NSW. Inland Rail is relevant to the following goals included in the Strategy:

- Drive regional employment and regional business growth
- Invest in economic infrastructure and connectivity.

The Strategy notes that greater physical and virtual connectivity between regional centres, major ports, Sydney, neighbouring states, and the broader region can increase prosperity in regional NSW. Relevant actions include improvements in regional transport through regional transport plans and the NSW Freight and Ports Strategy (refer Section 3.4).

4.4 Upper North West Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022

The NSW Government has assisted local councils and their communities to develop 37 Regional Economic Development Strategies across regional NSW. The Upper North West Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 (NSW Government et al 2018) is the culmination of collaboration between the Moree Plains Shire, Narrabri Shire, Gwydir Shire and Inverell Shire councils, key stakeholders, the broader regional community and the NSW Government's Centre for Economic and Regional Development. The Strategy sets out a long term economic vision and associated core strategies for the functional economic region.

Core strategies have been identified to capture the opportunities, including the following strategy relevant to the proposal:

- Improve freight efficiency in the engine industries of Agriculture and Mining.

4.5 New England North West Regional Plan 2036

The New England North West Regional Plan 2036 (NSW Government 2017) has been prepared to guide the NSW Government's land use planning priorities and decisions for the region for the next 20 years. It provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land use plans, development proposals, and infrastructure funding decisions.

The Plan recognises that:

- The region is strategically located between Sydney and Brisbane, and that high-quality transport networks to Newcastle, Sydney and South East Queensland will provide ready access to domestic and international markets and services
- Upgrades to transport infrastructure, including the development of the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail and intermodal freight terminals, are making it easier for goods, services and people to move across the region and beyond.

Goals, directions and actions that are relevant to Inland Rail include:

- Strong infrastructure and transport networks for a connected future
- Expand emerging industries through freight and logistics connectivity
- Work with the Australia Government and councils as the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail program progresses.

Consistent with the Regional Plan the Inland Rail program is connecting and upgrading existing infrastructure to promote freight connectivity.

4.6 Strategic Regional Land Use Plan New England North West

The New England North West Strategic Regional Land Use Plan (Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2012) represents one component of the Government's broader Strategic Regional Land Use Policy. The policy comprises multiple initiatives to address land use conflict in regional areas, particularly focused on managing coal and coal seam gas issues. The Plan provides a strategic framework for the New England North West region, delivering the necessary context for Government investment priorities, servicing strategies and local environmental plan making.

Key infrastructure issues are identified, particularly those relating to the growth of the mining industry. These issues include road and rail capacity and increased demand for health and social services. The plan recognises that the provision of infrastructure is vital in supporting economic growth and development while also maintaining liveability.

4.7 Moree Plains 2035 Community Strategic Plan

The Moree Plains 2035 Community Strategic Plan identifies the long-term aspirations of the Moree Plains Shire Council. The Strategic Plan describes the Moree Plains Shire Council's future through four key themes (Inclusive, Caring Community; Vibrant Regional Ecology; Environmental Role Mode; and Coordinated, Committed Leadership) which focus attention on the broad range of issues and activities that area important for the Moree Plains Shire Council.

The Strategic Plan comments that agriculture is the main industry in Moree Plains Shire. Large scale cereal and cotton crops provide export industries for the region, while sheep, cattle, oil seeds, olives and pecan nuts contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Rail services provide seasonal services for the transport of bulk agricultural produce.

The Strategic Plan identifies 12 priority issues that will guide the strategic planning direction of the Moree Plains Shire. Two priority issues are highly relevant to Inland Rail: the condition of the local road network and supporting local jobs and businesses. Outcomes of the Strategic Plan that Inland Rail will help achieve include:

- Take advantage of opportunities to increase safety in public places and on public roads
- Pursue new ideas and approaches for business and infrastructure investment.

4.8 Gwydir Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027

The Gwydir Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 is the highest level plan prepared by the Gwydir Shire Council, spanning a period of 10 years. It reflects the community's main priorities and future aspirations while also considering trends, issues and future demands.

The Strategic Plan has five major focus areas: a healthy and cohesive community; building and business base; an environmentally responsible shire; proactive regional and local leadership; and organisational management. Inland Rail is mentioned in relation to the 'healthy and cohesive community' focus area – an assessment of community aspirations that was conducted in March 2016 indicated that progression of the Inland Rail program is of interest to the Gwydir Shire Community. In response, the Gwydir Shire Council has committed to advocating and planning for improved social, health and transport outcomes for the Shire.

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