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Inland Rail – Albury to Illabo SSI 10055

I am writing in response to the Inland Rail Environmental Impact Study which has been released for public comment. I would like to state I object to this proposal while the proposition continues to include a plan to run the Inland Railway through the city of Wagga Wagga along existing lines.

I would like to make comment and raise my considerable concerns as follows:

1. The proposition to run the Inland Railway along existing lines, through the city of Wagga Wagga will give rise to increased traffic disruption, reduced road safety, greater noise and, significantly reduced ambience for the area of the city which lies along the rail corridor. This rail corridor is routed through the city's regionally significant medical precinct, a key educational precinct, as well as city's heritage residential area. It has been acknowledged in the Environmental Impact Statement that the issues of noise, traffic disruption and reduced ambience will be of concern during both the upgrade phase and when the planned increase in freight traffic occurs in the future.
2. The routing of the Inland Railway along the current rail corridor will create significant impacts to vehicular traffic movements along Bourke/Docker Streets and Edmonson/Best Streets, two key south-north arterial roads which take large amounts of local and regional traffic into the Wagga Wagga CBD. These two arterial roads both have major intersections with Edward Street which is in fact the Sturt Highway, a major national highway taking traffic between Adelaide, Sydney and Canberra. Edward Street is the major east-west arterial vehicle route across the city of Wagga Wagga, carrying a huge amount of traffic each week ranging from domestic vehicles to Double-B heavy haul trucks and everything in between.
3. Specific areas of concern for Bourke Street/Docker Street are:
 - a. The Bourke Street level crossing. This is already a busy rail crossing. Increased rail traffic will cause further traffic congestion and road safety issues. Current rail traffic causes road vehicles to back up through the Docker Street/Brookong Ave intersection which renders the lights at this intersection redundant. Traffic is brought to a total standstill and can back up down to the Edward Street (Sturt Highway)/Docker Street intersection where it disrupts the functioning of that

intersection. Traffic also backs up along Brookong Ave when it is unable to move through the Docker Street/Brookong Ave intersection. Other side streets are also adversely affected when traffic is stopped for trains. Longer and more frequent trains will only serve to significantly increase traffic congestion on this key south-north arterial road. This will have a flow on effect onto other roads including Edward Street (Sturt Highway).

- b. Docker/Bourke Street runs through the heart of the regional medical precinct, an area which services thousands of people from across the southern part of NSW and beyond, at two hospitals, day surgeries, multiple doctors, specialist, allied health and other medical premises, including cancer care, medical imaging, community health, aged care services and two rural medical schools. This area has to cater for regular emergency ambulance traffic and the question must be asked (and answered) how will this emergency traffic be managed in the increased congestion which is going to result from putting more rail traffic through the Bourke Street crossing?
 - c. An additional source of congestion, which will only increase as the city grows, is the traffic from the “education triangle” where two high schools, the TAFE College and special needs schools are located. The traffic from these educational establishments’ feeds along Coleman Street at the beginning and end of the school day significantly impacting the Bourke Street crossing.
 - d. Disability access across the Bourke Street level crossing is currently extremely compromised. Increased rail traffic and related congestion will only increase the difficulties for those people using various disability and aged related vehicles who need to cross at the Bourke Street level crossing. This population is growing to the south of the level crossing as new housing developments, which include diversity housing, are currently being built.
4. The second major area of concern for traffic impact and safety is Edmonson/Best Streets. These streets jointly service the abovementioned major educational precinct of the city. Located in the immediate vicinity of the Best/Edmonson Street rail bridge are a primary school, two high schools, two special needs schools, and the Riverina TAFE, plus child care and preschool services. Traffic - vehicular, foot and cycle - going to and from these educational institutions use the Best Street/Edward Street (Sturt Highway) intersection every day.
- a) The Environmental Impact Statement states there is a plan is to lift the bridge over the railway line at Edmonson Street just south of the Best Street/Edward Street

(Sturt Highway) intersections by 2.8 metres. This will result in a very steep approach over the bridge into the Edward Street/Best Street intersection. This intersection is already a very busy intersection with traffic travelling both ways across the bridge each day (including school buses) and with the additional complications of lack of visibility of the Edward Street (Sturt Highway) intersection from the southern (hill) approach and the twice daily school student foot traffic in all directions through an intersection with a national highway.

- b) Given the increase steepness of the hill rise and fall on Edmonson Street which will be caused by lifting the bridge another 2.8 metres, the line-of-sight for motor vehicle drivers as they approach the Edward Street/Best Street intersection from the south will be further reduced. There is currently no ability for vehicle drivers to see the lights at the intersection until they crest the top of the “bridge caused” hill on Edmonson Street. The problems caused by this steep descent into the extremely busy Best Street/Edward Street (Sturt Highway) intersection will raise the risk of accidents involving children and/or heavy vehicles considerably. Having personal experience of almost being “rear ended” by an overly energetic driver coming over the hill and down into that intersection from the south I can only state to you forcefully, how dangerous this situation will become with an additional 2.8 metres of height.
 - c) Any attempt to “level” Edmonson Street to reduce the steep incline created by raising the bridge as it approaches the Edward Street intersection, or smooth Best Street as it leaves the intersection can only result in very poor outcomes for homeowners, pedestrians and cyclists along the Best and Edmonson streets. In addition, Erin Street would be impacted negatively with such a process.
 - d) The impact of this bridge raising option, on South Wagga Public School will be considerable due to the upgrade issues, and then into the future with increased train traffic, road safety concerns, noise and vibrations. This school, which is tasked with educating the local primary aged population, will be left with a future of a national highway running along its southern boundary and increased rail traffic running along its northern boundary. Hardly an improved outcome for a school which already has traffic noise, road safety, vibration and air quality challenges.
5. The plans to upgrade the footbridges are also fraught. Problems with the casual dismissal of heritage related issues, together with the steep inclines and declines of the resulting bridges for mothers with prams, toddlers on bikes and disabled and elderly people on foot or in a

chair or on a scooter have not been addressed to the comfort of local people. Access to the educational services and to city on foot will be severely compromised.

6. Finally, there are concerns about the increased traffic congestion which will occur due to the anecdotally reported need to slow trains so they can safely cross the viaduct, when exiting the city to the north. This is apparently needed to manage the aging piece of infrastructure and to reduce noise and vibration. Should this management approach continue after the introduction of increased numbers of freight trains it will mean slower times for trains to clear the Bourke Street level crossing, increasing problems with traffic disruption in that area.

In conclusion, I will simply state that placing the Inland Railway through the City of Wagga Wagga, which is the largest inland city in NSW with a population of 65,000 and a shopping/service population of 200,000 is not appropriate. It will lead to increased noise, vibration, traffic disruption, road safety issues and reduced ambiance for local school children, homeowners, other citizens and medical service providers and users. The city has long been cut in half by the Sturt Highway and the southern railway line. To enhance the quality of life in the city, the access and the traffic flows need less disruption, not more. The only appropriate action for the Inland Railway is for the line to be routed around the city on its way north via the Bomen industrial complex, rather than through it. Yes, that will create additional cost up front, but will also future proof a large piece of nationally significant infrastructure for Australia and so will provide value for money.