

# Submission to the amended Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Inland Rail Project.

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From:

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I am the owner of a property in the Gulargambone area (called Warrien) which will be seriously impacted by the proposed rail line.

In summary, we do not consider that the amended EIS has resolved any of the previous problems, concerns or disadvantages of the project.

We set out below some of these concerns:

1. **Inadequate allowance for water flows and changes to water flows:** At a time when we are experiencing extreme weather events (floods, fire, storms), we consider that it is very difficult to model how the train line will effect the flow of water. Over the last few years, we have experienced large flows of water over the route of the train close to Seven Mile Lane, Gulargambone.

We do not consider that sufficient detailed studies have been completed on the water flows and what culverts, bridges etc are needed. We consider the further studies and more detailed reports are needed on the extent and need for culverts to ensure that the train line does not change water flows over the neighbouring land. At the last minute, additional culverts and flood mitigation areas were introduced by ARTC which suggests that the ARTC have underestimated the potential water flows.

The amended EIS does not include sufficient detailed studies of the effect of the train line on water flows and additional work is certainly needed. As with all reports and studies on this train line, this work should be completed by an independent organisation and full details of their finding made public and easily assessable.

2. **Immediate complete and long term compensation for affected persons/businesses:** What guarantees do the businesses along the route of the Inland Rail train line have that they will be covered for any damages or losses caused by the introduction of the line? Why should small business have to bear the costs of any immediate damage and then have to attempt to claw back the losses from the Government?

We should receive an indemnity and a simple and quick mechanism to claim and be paid any current and/or future losses (whenever they arise) due to the imposition of the train line on our properties.

It is not acceptable that the Government does not stand behind the project and confirm that no small business will be liable for any unexpected liabilities due to a Government infrastructure project. It is only fair and reasonable for the Government to pay all short term and long term costs which it imposes on or make a business suffer because of its actions.

In addition, the Government should provide an immediate mechanism for us to be paid our time in dealing with the Inland Rail project. I do not understand why the ARTC is getting paid by the Government to build the project, however a small business is meant to bear the costs (financial and mental liabilities) of considering a material infrastructure project imposed on their business without an immediately mechanism where we can be paid for our time in considering all the relevant information and impacts. For example, we should be paid for our time in writing these submissions.

3. **Level Crossings:** It should be confirmed that all level crossings will be active crossings with boom gates and lights. There have been previous fatal accidents at crossing where drivers could not see a train coming at speed due to dust from local farming activities.
4. **Failure to consider all economic and social considerations:** The town of Coonamble expected and wanted to be a freight hub for the train. There does not appear to have been proper economic or social considerations of the benefits of the train line going via Coonamble. While the ARTC say that the long term costs of using existing lines does not justify using the existing lines, there does not appear to be any independent and detailed economic and social studies into whether this statement is actually correct.

We need an independent and detailed study on whether the assessment of the ARTC that existing lines should not be used is correct. The terms of reference of this study should also be wider than the previous work of the ARTC and include consideration of additional factors such as the benefits to regional communities, the loss of prime agricultural land, the loading and transport of large quantities of regional produce and the risk of unknown liabilities arising from building a new train line through developed agricultural land.

For example, there does not appear to be a proper assessment of what goods could be loaded on the train from regional Australia. The statements that trains could be loaded at points along the track appear to be generally false statements to appease rural communities. There appears to be no actual plan to load trains with regional goods. If such a plan existed, it would include a cost and benefit analysis of whether the train should go via Coonamble to be closer to all the grain produced in that region.

5. **Alternative routes not properly considered – no weighing or consideration of long term productivity loss or community damage:** In respect of the section of the route from Curban to Mount Tenandra, there is an alternate route along the existing train line to Gulargambone and then along the stock route from Gulargambone via the Box Ridge Road which uses existing infrastructure and avoids any loss of prime agricultural land. Please see Option C- Box Ridge Road Option in the Narramine to Narrabri Options report. It has been stated that it would add 9 minutes to the time taken from Melbourne to Brisbane which is not significant in time. However it is significant in avoiding the loss of prime agricultural land and the social damage to people's lives. There does not appear to be any value placed on the long term loss of agricultural land or the long term damage to people's lives and communities. Why is there not a price placed on the harm to people's lives caused by living next to a train for the rest of their lives.

Australia does not have much prime agricultural land – why waste such land when a train can be built on existing train lines and existing road routes.

6. **Inherent Conflict in ARTC Role:** Is there not an inherent conflict that the ARTC is advising on the Inland Rail Project when they wish to manage the building and operation of the project?

We need an independent review of the work of the ARTC (as they are conflicted – the people of the ARTC want the project to proceed so they have long term jobs).

7. **ARTC Not Subject to Duties of Government:** It is also not accepted that the ARTC is not a Commonwealth Government Department subject to all the duties and obligations of the Government. My understanding is that the ARTC is a private corporation owned by the Government but is not subject to all the duties and obligations of a Government department (for example to act in the best interests of the public or to disclose information under the Freedom of Information Act or have its decisions subject to Judicial Review).

This outsourcing of the roles of the Government to a private corporation is unacceptable. If the Government wishes to do something, it is an obligation and duty to the people of Australia to do that role through the established institution of the body of the Government. The ARTC should be subject to the same duties, obligations and review as if it was part of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The planning for Inland Rail should be undertaken by an independent Government Department (not a corporation who has a long term financial interest in the project – an inherent conflict of interest).

8. **Inadequate consideration of fire risk:** The consideration of the risk of fire and the devastation it could cause has not been properly considered. The cost of insurance for fire is rising and why should we pay an increased fire insurance premium because the Government puts the rail line through our property?

Kind regards

Heather Worner.