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The Hon. Anthony Roberts, MP
Minister for Planning Department of Planning and Environment
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SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO INLAND RAIL NARROMINE TO NARRABRI SPIR.

I OBJECT TO THE PROJECT.

INTRODUCTION:

I am an impacted landholder in the study area the Inland Rail Narromine to Narrabri Inland Rail Greenfield Project. I am a long-standing resident of the Narromine community of over 35 years. My family has been on the land for over 175 years. I am passionate about our community and its future.

Merebone is a registered on-title conservation area adjoining a neighbouring conservation property. Both conservation areas adjoin the Webbs Stock Reserve providing an approximate total of 130 hectares of wildlife corridor.

I submit that the N2N EIS is not in the public interest, impacts are unacceptable and the project should not be approved.

My submission addresses issues associated with Route Planning, Selection Processes, Flooding, Consultation, Air Quality and Engagement on Route Alignment.

I would like to thank the Minister for considering my submission and submit the flowing response in relation to ARTC's release of the SPIR.

ARTC have failed to adequately address the issues I have raised.

The "Sections where issues raised in submission are addressed" does not address all the issues I have raised. They have generically categorised community concerns and lumped individuals together. My submission raised very serious specific procedural inadequacies regarding consultation, MCA documentation and lack of data, route selection and flooding issues. I spent a great deal of time completing this and I expect a specific response to the serious concerns I raised.

The following covers details of my issues with ARTC's responses:

1.1 The information provided in Appendix B section 2.4.1 continues to be misleading. ARTC present flowchart Fig 2.5 as evidence of the concurrent process used in support of the 2016/17 MCA

route selection process. This flowchart was created in 2020 for the Inland Rail route history document and has no cited relevance to the 2016/17 MCA process.

For the response to submissions to imply this documentation was used concurrently to support the MCAs is false and misleading. Section 2.4.1 does not cite this as the reference source. This flowchart is not used in any of the three MCA documents and evaluations. It is a flowchart directly cut and pasted from the 2020 route history document. It is deceptive for ARTC to imply that this was used in 2016 without citing relevant evidence.

1.2 Fig 2.6 Flood extent Narromine: ARTC cite this image as evidence that the Eastern option would require 11 kms less track in the floodplain than the Western Alignment. This map has no citation or data reference. It is inconsistent with extent flood mapping of the 2008 gazetted flood management plan Narromine to Oxley and newly gazetted Macquarie Flood Management Plan (MFMP) 2021. Both these documents have design flood analysis and detailed mapping of significant high impact flood extent potentially impacting the Western concept alignment through to its crossing of the Macquarie River. Gazetted FMP mapping indicates significant flood risk for 4 kms of the Western Concept alignment.

ARTC have conveniently omitted to disclose that the 2010 IRAS report analysed both alignments. This report made reference to the 2008 FMP mapping and reached the totally opposite analysis in relation to flooding risk with the Eastern alignment having substantially worse flooding issues. ARTC's Fig 2.6 omits 1% AEP flooding for all other streams impacting the Backwater Cowal - Eumungerie Road alignment (N2B) when claiming the East is 50% less flood impacted. The presentation of incomplete data makes ARTC's analysis invalid and their claim that the eastern alignment would require 14.3km less flood structures is an outrageous assumption. The risk to our community's lives and livelihoods is too great and the precautionary principle must be applied.

The Narromine Western alignment as chosen in 2010 IRAS report is the most cost effective, minimal impact, shortest route for the N2N around Narromine.

1.3 Cost savings cited by ARTC in this section. ARTC claim that the Western option would require \$12.2 million additional earth works and the Eastern option would provide structural win. This assumption has been refuted by ARTC's own documentation including the SEARS application and EIS where they clearly state the Geotech assumption were based on visual inspections and not soil tested and the 2020 EIS concluded there was no opportunity for structural win South and East of Narromine and limited structural win North along Eumungerie Road. This impact is significant enough that 3 of the 4 N2N burrow pits have to be located at Narromine with 2 in the south and 1 along Eumungerie Road. Again, the Narromine Western alignment as chosen in 2010 IRAS report is the most cost effective, minimal impact, shortest route for the N2N around Narromine.

1.4 ARTC claim cost savings are being made through no longer having to fund grade separations near Narromine. ARTC have contentiously transferred the grade separation requirements to a blackspot level crossing removal program funded by the Federal and State governments. I believe this duplicitous cost transferral fails the Commonwealth transparency, integrity and probity requirements. I submit there are no savings as the costs have been hidden.

1.5 ARTC have failed to disclose the real additional alignment length and state the Eastern alignment is 1km longer when it is actually 8 -9 km longer. They have failed to mention the current position of the track means the cost saving relating to the use of 13kms of brownfield alignment has

been lost resulting in many additional households and farms being impacted by the alignment change. An impact ARTC has never socially or economically assessed.

1.6 ARTC claim moving the project to the East removes afflux risks to Narromine township. This claim is unsubstantiated. The greenfield component of the concept alignment was over 5kms west of Narromine at its closest point and ARTC must substantiate this outrageous claim given they are constructing a 1.2 km component of the concept alignment and have not done any analysis on this. ARTC's tendency to make unsubstantiated assumptions and present them as fact is of great concern to the community. This conduct does not meet the Commonwealth's Inland Rail Statement of Expectations guidelines.

1.7 ARTC cites proximity of Narromine Airport as a key constraint. This constraint has not been mitigated by moving the alignment East as the existing main western line still impacts the airport and the construction impacts of Western 1.2 km greenfield connection will occur anyway.

1.8 ARTC's tendency to base project decisions on unsubstantiated assumptions flies in the face of the precautionary principle. All the above issues I have raised clearly indicate that the precautionary principle has not been applied in their decision processes. They have discarded their own previous study findings without any disclosure or analysis. They have moved the alignment without consulting severely impacted landholders some of which have local family land management experience dating back to the 1880's. They have failed to provide the community the opportunity to provide landscape rain fall and runoff measurements for use in the flood modelling despite the entire alignment having only a handful of meteorological and depth flow gauging stations. ARTC guidelines required the use of local data if insufficient meteorological gauges are unavailable. These observations should be welcomed by the project as they provide valuable insights into risks.

2.1 Refusal to address Community Consultative Committee questions:

Attending a CCC meeting meant observers would need to commit up to 4 hours of their time. Initially the N2N CCC's refused to allow observers. Then, they allowed observers but they were not allowed to ask questions. Then, observers were allowed to ask questions but they had to be in writing before the meeting which meant that any observer questions that may have arisen during the meeting were not allowed to be asked. In the final few CCC meetings questions were allowed, however, by then the community were so infuriated and/or frustrated they no longer bothered to attend. CCC's are extensively used by DPIE and should have clear consistent avenues where community can have meaningful engagement.

2.2 I raised in my EIS submission ARTC's point blank refusal to allow questions regarding route alignment changes. ARTC response was, "It was a ministerial decision, it's out of our hands" and "it's historical, part of phase 1 and we're now in phase 2". The shutting down of these important questions left the community unsupported by the CCC process. This is a fundamental SEARS requirement and yet ARTC refuse to engage the community on the issue. It has not been addressed by their response to submissions and remains an ongoing area of conflict.

I reject ARTC's response to submissions relating to their failure to consult with key areas of the Eastern community alignment change. Consultation must be meaningful. ARTC's propensity for box ticking is unacceptable. ARTC's consultation still remains a big issue with landholders and community's anger and distrust is at an all-time low.

There is no explanation as to why they expanded the study areas without consultation and informing the Commonwealth. Why it is appropriate to consult Western landholders prior to the alignment change and Eastern landholders after the route has been changed? This is clear procedural bias and failure to provide fair hearing.

2.3 Tomingley to Curban alignment:

ARTC have not addressed my question as to why a much straighter Tomingley to Curban alignment was not analysed given the project was obviously looking for other viable alternatives. Statements that the train would go through Dubbo are inappropriate as many alternatives are available. This alternative would enable ARTC to utilise existing track between Dubbo and Curban, link to farming communities and require substantially less new track. It would make substantial cost savings relating to less greenfield, greater use of existing alignment, much less flood prone and the potential for structural wins. It would also provide future opportunity for rural business and farmers to have potential for more efficient logistic connections. Considering it would minimise disturbance to farms, landholders and businesses the failure of the project to analyse these options is clearly a deficiency to the project's viability.

It would also enable ARTC to position the track further up the catchment substantially reducing the projects flooding potential. This option would have considerable budgetary savings and would add no additional transit time. There is potential to also explore a ring road option funnelling new highway traffic around Dubbo. This will negate the need for the contentious River St Bridge project and the massive bridge over the Macquarie River at Narromine. Therefor taxpayers will not have to pay for two bridges over the Macquarie, only one. There are massive cost savings to be made. Please refer to 2.3.1.

2.3.1 Alternative Inland Rail route - Tomingley to Curban via Dubbo business precincts.

Key Points

1. Start and finish at common points located on the current Inland Rail route (see maps below).
2. Both routes are approximately 140km long with very similar transit times.
3. The Dubbo route requires over 40km less Green Field track using substantial existing and already up graded track between Narromine to Dubbo, Dubbo to Curban.
4. 40km less green field translates into:
 - a. Around \$200 million savings in direct construction costs.
 - b. Additional long-term savings through reduced network maintenance.
 - c. Far less disruption and disturbance to rural farms and communities.
5. Routing towards Dubbo results in additional benefits:
 - a. Easy access to Central NSW largest regional logistics hubs – 3 highways and 4 rail junctions, including NSW largest rail maintenance facility.
 - b. Easy access to Central NSW largest regional manufacturing and retail hubs through West and North Dubbo business precincts.

- c. A massive reduction in flood risk exposure as the alignment runs near the catchment east/west divide. Additionally, Macquarie River flooding is channel confined around Dubbo within well-defined flood channels. At Narromine the Macquarie has several substantial breakout points which divert large flood volumes out the Macquarie directly into the currently planned Inland Rail construction area, approximately 16km of track will be in very high-risk areas.
 - d. Excellent geotechnical conditions through the Sappa Bulga range avoiding the substantial unstable flood plains around Narromine.
- 6. The Dubbo route can run parallel to the Newell Highway utilizing the large crown land highway road reserve.
 - 7. Well west of Dubbo the alignment can be routed North along rural road corridors to link with the existing Dubbo – Coonamble rail line near Brocklehurst. This alignment minimises community impacts whilst capitalising on linkages with Dubbo business precincts.

These are the types of synergies and forward thinking that taxpayers expect of its leaders.

3.1 Costs and Funding:

ARTC have not addressed my concerns regarding the financial viability of the project in relation to its overall budget and the exponential cost escalations that are occurring in every alignment section. In simple terms the project has been allocated a federal government budget to construct and deliver Inland Rail operationally. The construction base costs are escalating to such a level that the original base cost evaluation undertaken in 2010 and 2015 are redundant. The project BCR was 1.02 in 2015 and is now strongly negative indicating the project has limited capacity to finish the required standard of infrastructure works. There are requirements in the statement of expectations that the commonwealth and community be kept abreast of these issues. This has not occurred and these budget blowouts potentially compromise ARTC with regards to their corporate governance requirements.

4.2 ARTC have not addressed the issues of the lies I was told during consultation with ARTC on August 3rd 2017 where, during an ARTC Information Session at Soul Food Café Narromine, I approached them to be informed of route selection developments. I was told that the route was definitely west of Narromine following the concept alignment. With reference to ARTC maps, staff showed me where it would go, indicating that landholder agreements already had and currently were being put in place. They categorically stated that the preferred route was to the West and were no longer considering the Eastern option. ARTC's failure to address this issue does not meet their statutory requirements.

ARTC have not even acknowledged this submission issue let alone addressed it. It deeply concerns me that a taxpayer funded corporation which has documented governance obligations would ignore and therefor condone the use of lies and misleading statements by their staff. This makes me feel alienated, isolated and deeply of distrustful of anyone associated with this project. DPIE are the gatekeepers and this issue needs to be investigated and ARTC held to account.

As all the above points have demonstrated it is necessary for the precautionary principle to be applied to the East Narromine routes flood risk and I ask that ARTC's conduct be investigated and a full explanation provided.

It is self-evident from the number of negative submissions which took the time to challenge the projects procedures and findings that this project has failed to positively engage the community and address issues. The number of submissions that in principle support the project yet presented long lists of grievances is staggering.

It appears that ARTC has alienated all but their political supporters. Should landholders and communities continue to be ignored, Inland Rail has and will continue to meet, huge opposition on every alignment section and numerous delays in Qld. At the very least this project must to be placed on hold until the Federal review of the route selection and business case is completed.

I submit the following is the only fair and transparent option for the project to repair the damage caused to the community:

1. ARTC return to the alignment route selection phase and undertakes an independent, transparent, unbiased evaluation of all study areas, concept and alternative options. This information and the underlying data must be made available to community. Any evaluation must provide equal opportunity for impacted landholders and community to be consulted. It must base its decisions on sound scientific assessments of all impacting factors. It must clearly and consistently inform the community of all potential impacts and provide fair hearing opportunity for residents to discuss and resolve impacts, issues and resolutions.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Knop