

# **Submission to Inland Rail Environmental Impact Statement**

My comments largely concur with the submission from Wagga Wagga City Council.

While I have ticked the "I object to the project" option I should clarify that it only relates to the passage through the city, not the project overall which I do support as a great benefit to the nation.

## **Realignment of rail corridor around the city centre**

My preference would be for a realignment of the rail corridor for freight trains to bypass the city centre from the South and re-join the corridor near Bomen so the intermodal freight hub is connected.

The Bomen viaduct is not sustainable in the near term due to structural issues - as outlined in the Wagga Wagga City Council submission - and will need replacing. It does not provide for a duplication of the rail line which will undoubtedly be needed in the future. Nor does the corridor that currently runs through the city centre. It would be far more financially responsible in the longer term to address both these issues now rather than retrospectively. Part of this could be a transport way that provides an additional road crossing of the Murrumbidgee River and floodplains for road freight transport that will service distribution to and from the intermodal hub. This would be a holistic and economic solution and benefit to the future transport needs that are the prime reason for the proposal in the first instance. The initial cost would be high but be far less than the future cost of duplicated works associated with a major construction and escalated pricing, not to mention the economic benefit loss incurred over the years by a not suitable solution.

Wagga Wagga has been identified as a Targeted Growth Centre by the New South Wales Government. For this to be a success the amenity of the City cannot be compromised, which a central rail corridor as proposed would. Increased transit times and noise would quickly undermine the amenity of the city and the growth proposed as a major regional city would be compromised. The subsequent decline in the attraction of the city for people to live will be detrimental to the ability to provide a workforce for the Bomen Activation precinct, the funding for which has largely been committed by multiple levels of government.

The EIS in general does not address the issues of noise or traffic issues once the Inland Rail is operating. From my current address in Central Wagga I can hear train movement. When the IR is fully operational and more trains with far higher payloads are passing through the level of noise and frequency will increase dramatically. For residents, schools and businesses, particularly those along the corridor, there does not appear to have been any planning for noise abatement buffers or walls, which are common for many other infrastructure projects that cause an increase in noise levels.

## **Issues with the Current Proposal**

In terms of the current proposal, my submission relates to the Bourke/Docker Streets level crossing, and the Edmondson/Best Street overpass, and subsequently the Lake Albert Road access to the City as it become overloaded with traffic escaping the delays at the other crossings.

Having lived in a suburb where my travel route to work was down Bourke Street, across the level crossing and continuing on along Docker Street, I believe the impact of this level crossing remaining are far more severe than the EIS proposes.

During works on the Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital (also known as Wagga Wagga Base Hospital) it was not unusual for traffic to be banked up from that area back through the roundabout on Bourke/Urana Streets when traffic flow was interrupted for movements to and from the site. This was regular during normal work transit times - say 7:45 to 9:15 in the morning. In the afternoon travel times after 4pm till around 6pm traffic would be banked up along Docker Street back to the Forsyth Street intersection and further.

Also, during times when freight trains require the crossing to be closed the wait times for the current size trains are far greater than those indicated in the EIS. Traffic will be backed up through intersections, traffic lights and roundabouts on an ongoing basis. I have recently experienced being held up in a traffic line that stretched to the north of Edward Street while waiting for a freight train to traverse the crossing. This would be far better addressed in the initial construction phase rather than having another construction period and delays to traffic and trains when services are fully operational.

This level crossing needs to be eliminated either by an underpass or overhead bridge, whichever is more feasible after engineering and other studies. This obviously would have an impact on Chaston Street and part of Docker Street but that would be a lesser imposition on traffic flow in general. It would however, need consideration of the fact that this is the major medical referral precinct servicing the whole of the Riverina region.

It has the benefit of being near the Wagga Showgrounds, which I understand are Crown Lands. This could be used for alignment purposes and potential connection with Chaston Street and the medical precinct. The realignment of Bourke Street to the west of the current crossing with an underpass joining a redirected Chaston Street principally towards Docker Street could be a solution. At this point land to the South is Crown Land whereas to the north of the rail line there would be greater room for an underpass to come up to road level and allow a sweeping bend onto Chaston Street.

The crossing does have a not insignificant amount of foot traffic. What controls are in place to safeguard people taking a risk if arriving just before a train? Again, an underpass to the West would eliminate that concern.

At some point when the city grows a similar situation will arise at the Fernleigh Road level crossing. Again, pedestrian traffic is a direct crossing over the tracks. This would be a significant risk again to people taking the unsafe option of trying to beat the train.

The risks of pedestrian accidents at level crossings is highlighted in the Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Strategy 2018-2027 where accident numbers have been recorded and tabulated over a number of years. The risks of vehicular accidents are similarly outlined in the same Strategy.

## **Summary**

In summary the main issues are what is the best future option for a rail corridor.

Too many factors have not been assessed or addressed in the EIS for the currently proposed route through the city.