

05 February 2021

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Dear Mr M. Fallon,

RE: (SSI-9487) Inland Rail – Narromine to Narrabri

Please note we respectfully request that our details above be withheld from the public. Thank you.

Introduction

We are writing to you to voice our objections to the Inland Rail - Narromine to Narrabri section. I am a [REDACTED], with an ever-growing business, and my wife [REDACTED] and I live and work from our own private, tranquil, and immaculate home at [REDACTED], just a 9-minute drive from the CBD of our hometown of Narrabri, where we both have many generations of heritage. We purchased our ideal 100-hectare property in 2001, and over the following 7 years, built our dream home [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which we have worked so hard for, and are extremely proud of. We have raised our [REDACTED] on this property, and we are so fortunate that they both live close to us, and even though they are now [REDACTED] we still get to see them both daily as they come and go to tend to their [REDACTED]

As a family, we have had many lengthy discussions about the Inland Rail route, as it is proposed to pass through our property. We are all deeply saddened by this, as this project will destroy the serenity of our home. The tranquility of our private, rural setting has also been – thankfully – a major promotion of healing and wellbeing for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] doctors that it is essential to [REDACTED] health and healing that [REDACTED] does not expose [REDACTED] to any stress. Prior to mention of the Inland Rail our home was the perfecting setting to shelter her from stress, yet now, its' unfortunate location in relation to the currently proposed route of the Inland Rail is increasingly becoming a source of stress itself.

But even above ruining our rural paradise, our main concern is the safety of our immediate family (myself, my wife, and our [REDACTED] daughters and son-in-law) having to frequently pass over a level crossing, as the [REDACTED] of us all travel in and out of the property multiple times a day. We also fear for the safety of our extended family, friends, employees, suppliers, subcontractors and clients, and will be reluctant to invite

them to our property once the Inland Rail is operational, as we would never be able to live with ourselves if someone were injured or killed by a train at our access.

After meeting with you yesterday we are extremely grateful but also disappointed that we were not given the opportunity to discuss this with you much earlier. Planning should have been involved with local community members and landholders in face-to-face meetings much earlier on in the planning process.

The project will have major negative impacts on our property and our family, and we are sympathetic to other landholders and families like ours whom it will affect. We make objection to some parts of the EIS submitted for this project for reasons detailed below, and request that an alternate route be strongly considered, unless landholders affected by this are generously compensated.

Objections to EIS Matters

A7.7.4 Public Safety

This section identifies that there is a risk to pedestrians and road vehicles as a result of collisions with trains at level crossings. It states that "... potential risks would be managed by undertaking the design with an appropriate emphasis on safety, according to relevant design standards and requirements." There are 11 people killed every year at rail crossings. Inland rail are adding another 55 crossings in this route. In Victoria rail crossings are banned. What will make NSW change? Maybe after this project is complete? Maybe after deaths? It will be too late then. 1 death is too many. When we first talked about our concerns with ARTC, we were told we will be given signage as it's too expensive for an overpass or lights etc. I don't think you can put a price on life and safety.

No matter how well designed a level crossing is, there is always a risk of fatality, especially with trains travelling at the proposed speed of the Inland Rail. No expert is required to work out that it is infinitely more likely for someone who uses a level crossing multiple times a day to get in and out of their own property to be hit and killed by a high-speed train, than if that railway line were to never exist on their property in the first place. That is the position in which the Inland Rail is putting our family and neighbours, yet this was hardly even addressed in the EIS. This is a huge disappointment.

We have a lot of vehicles travelling in and out of our property both daily and increasing at different times of the year depending on what work we are having running. Not only are my wife and I going in and out of the property daily, but our daughters also come out morning and night to [REDACTED] and my son-in-law works with me and helps me load and unload from my workshop on our property daily. All our parents are also elderly, and we are very close with a lot of extended family as well; as I mentioned previously, we both have many generations of local heritage. We are concerned for the safety of these people having to cross a high-speed rail line simply to visit us.

I also often have other builders who I work in conjunction with coming to my workshop, and also subcontractors, delivery truck drivers and the like, and we also use our home as a display home for potential clients. My business will suffer as I will not be comfortable inviting anyone to our property anymore, for fear of them being hit by a high-speed train.

We would like our safety taken seriously, and we request that provision for an alternate access be included in the design of the corridor so that we and our neighbours may travel safely, adjacent to the corridor on its' northwestern side, to intersect with the Yarrie Lake Road. We have marked up the Maps supplied in Map Book 5 of the EIS and attached them with this letter to illustrate our proposal. As you will see, with this option we would not have to interact with the high-speed trains on the Inland Rail, as we would be passing under the viaduct of the Yarrie Lake Road to get into Narrabri. Safety is our primary concern with this project, and this option would also give an alternative access in the case of an emergency. We realise that we would need to cross the Walgett line with this route, however this is a low-speed, relatively infrequently used line, with significantly lower risk.

It is our extremely strong opinion that in terms of cost of the entire project, it would be a small price to pay to keep the landholders that are being so greatly affected by this project safe.

B2 WATER RESOURCES

In the EIS there is no consideration for loss of dams. A dam cannot simply be shifted to another location. A dam is strategically placed to catch and hold as much water as possible from its wider catchment area. We have a wonderful dam near our front gate. We use it to water stock on the eastern side of our property, as it will be severed by the railway line, we will no longer have the use of this dam for this purpose. Our dam has such a wide catchment that any small downpour can top it up, and it cannot simply be replaced by constructing a similar feature on the other side of the railway line, as the proposed location of the line will also be severing the catchment area.

B9 NOISE AND VIBRATION

We do not agree with the way in which the noise modelling has been carried out for a few reasons. Firstly, there is a huge difference between wet & dry periods where sound/noise carry is concerned. Just as sound travels much more efficiently over water than ground, so too does it carry at greater distances and volumes over wet ground (after rain events) than it does over dry ground. We do not believe that this has been considered as it is not mentioned anywhere in the EIS. We would like to see that the noise modelling is carried out based on a true worst-case scenario. We do not believe it is good enough to say that the disturbance is going to be monitored once the Inland Rail is in operation.

Secondly, we understand the calculation of the “average” noise disturbance over a 24-hour period, but we do not believe it should play any part in determining what mitigations measures are taken to reduce noise impact on close-by properties. It is the *maximum* volume of any passing train in an instant, that is going to disturb someone’s sleep, or startle a horse and possibly cause injury to the rider, just as some basic examples.

The Inland Rail would be running across flat, open ground as it passes through our property, it will not have the same buffering benefits of the Newell Highway from the trees between the road and our property boundary. A 1.8 – 3.2km long train travelling at 85 – 115km/hour will be a *lot* noisier than any traffic on the Newell Highway, especially considering the Inland Rail is proposed to be built approximately two metres above natural ground level. All possible mitigation measures need to be taken to reduce this noise disturbance.

At our level crossing we would request to have installed, at a minimum, a wayside horn to reduce noise disturbance of train horns sounding, as well as flashing lights to increase safety.

B12 LAND USE AND PROPERTY

We have what we consider to be the ultimate lifestyle property; it is quiet, peaceful and productive. Having the Inland Rail built across our property, and severing our access will have massive negative affects on the way we use our land. Not only are we losing usable, productive area for livestock grazing and agistment, but we will also lose the privacy and ease of having our own private access to the highway.

[REDACTED]

Ever since we have lived here, the horses have always been ridden all the way up and down the driveway, either for straight line warm-ups or just a leisurely walk. Once the Inland Rail is constructed, this will never happen again as it will not be safe nor leisurely, as we will always be concerned that a train will come along and frighten the horses.

B13 VISUAL AMENITY

When we were looking to purchase our land, we looked at many other options. It was more expensive to build our home in the location that we chose, it was absolutely bare, no electricity or water. Other options that we looked at already had these services connected. But we chose the location of our dream home in the most quiet and secluded location that we could find whilst still being conveniently close to town.

We started on a blank canvas. We had to pay an earthworks contractor to construct our driveway 1.2km in length. We paid a considerable amount to have overhead powerlines erected to service our property from kilometres away. We had to have a bore drilled. So many things that we wouldn't have had to do elsewhere, but we did so for the perfect location and lifestyle. If we have Inland Rail passing through our property all of the reason for all of this work and money is for nothing. We would never have bought this land, nor put so much of our blood, sweat and tears into making it what it is today, had we known this would happen to us.

The Inland Rail is going to absolutely devastate the tranquil lifestyle that we love.

B14 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

We are tired of hearing about the benefits to business from Inland Rail, what about the negative impacts? Yes, it might create jobs for the town during construction, but once it is operational it will ruin the town. The proposed location of the Inland Rail is too close to town, it is going to destroy the amenity and thus the growth and economy of Narrabri.

If the proposed route goes ahead, it will have a negative impact on our building business, as I have already mentioned. I will be reluctant to invite anyone to come and view our home as a display home, as well as being uncomfortable with employees, contractors and suppliers crossing a high speed railway line to access our property & workshop. I would never be able to live with myself if someone were injured or killed at our crossing.

Our property will be massively devalued by the Inland Rail severing the access and ruining the amenity, safety and privacy. This is a huge negative socio-economic impact to our property. Landowners are more affected by anyone else, have zero positive impacts, and no choice in the matter. Shouldn't the affected landowners not only be compensated, but stand to make some monetary gain from it because we invested in this land?

Conclusion

In closing, we would again like to state our strong objection to the Inland Rail route passing through our property. Our main concern above all else is safety and the worry of this is already having an effect on our mental health, which will only get worse if/when the project comes to fruition. If an alternate route is not possible, and the route must pass through our property, we request that an alternate access for ourselves and neighboring properties be constructed to allow access via the Yarrie Lake Road in conjunction with the project as detailed above, to provide both a second access for emergencies and a safer alternative.

We request generous compensation for affected landowners, for the devaluation of land and potential land use, but also for the loss of tranquility of the rural lifestyle. Had we known 20 years ago that one day a railway line would be built through this piece of land, we would never have bought it and put our blood, sweat and tears into making it our forever home. Now the lifestyle of our forever home is being sacrificed forever, for the rest of Australia to benefit from the infrastructure to be built upon it.

We thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns and comments about this project. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this with us further, please do not hesitate to contact us on details previously provided to you. Thank you.

Kind Regards,

