

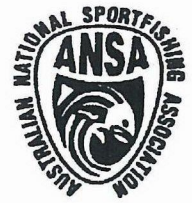


Newcastle Sportfishing Club Inc

PO Box 1 Islington NSW 2296

President: Rod Unicom Ph (02) 4968 0180

Secretary: Eddie Sitarz Ph (02) 4951 2065



Hexham Relief Roads Project (SSI_4992)
Major Projects Assessment
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39,
Sydney NSW 2001



4 September 2012

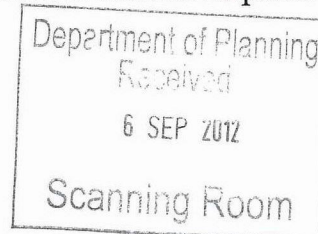
Hexham Relief Roads Project (SSI 4992) - Australian Rail Track Corporation

Newcastle Sportfishing Club Inc. members object to the proposed Australian Rail Track Corporation Project to construct five relief roads and associated works on land at Hexham.

The proposed project is along the Eastern side of Hexham Swamp which is undergoing rehabilitation to alleviate the impacts created by a former governments decision to fit and close flood gates on Ironbark Creek. The closing of those flood gates cut off the swamp from the Hunter River and isolated a prime fish and prawn nursery. A decision which has now cost millions of dollars to repair.

As a recreational fishing club we look forward to the benefits of biomass output from the rehabilitation of Hexham Swamp and Kooragang Island back to productive systems. We are concerned that the proposed ARTC works will cause serious negative impacts on the adjacent Hunter wetlands and estuary and be compounded if the Queensland Rail concept proposal currently on standby is also approved.

Modern thinking values swamps and wetlands for their rich biodiversity, filtration benefits and input to fisheries as marine life nurseries. Previous and current governments have supported these values by providing funding to rehabilitate the Hexham Swamps and adjacent Kooragang Island Wetlands. To approve developments which admit to having impacts on the surrounding wetlands seems counter productive. No matter what safeguards and controls are placed on industrial developments it has been shown that at some point in time they fail. More risk is associated when positioned in a wetland and/or estuarine environment and with that comes greater risk of more serious impacts due to the aqueous medium.



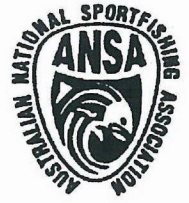


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The Queensland Department of Fisheries in 1999 valued the benefits derived directly and indirectly from swamps and floodplains at US \$19,580 /ha. This figure would have increased substantially since then particularly now the value to the economy of recreational fishing has been established. To jeopardise these important wetlands with a project which admits the criteria for selection are low cost, ease of property acquisition and ease of construction would be short sighted.

There are a number of regional strategy documents, planning policies and catchment plans with which the proposed projects conflict. The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy recommended land at Stony Pinch for the proposed QR National Project which was suitable and had no adverse impacts for the surrounding environment. Surely this area being remote from the Hunter wetlands and Hunter River flood plain would be the sensible option.

Newcastle Sportfishing Club Inc. members ask that this proposed project be refused on environmental grounds and that other more suitable locations be investigated or recommended.

Yours Sincerely

For the Executive and Committee of
Newcastle Sportfishing Club