

East Maitland, NSW 2323

Content:

NSW Department of Planning and Environment Submission: Inland Rail - Narrabri To North Star

Application No: SSI 7474

24 November 2017

I am very concerned at the high level of investment in rail on the Australian continent. Having a Master of Commerce degree from the University of Sydney, Australia that included units on transport and global capital markets, I believe Australia is over investing in rail.

The rail line from Melbourne to Brisbane via the coast is nowhere near full commercial capacity and the proposed inland route is a waste of taxpayers money where major population centres are less than 50,000 people. From my experience very few trains pass through Paterson, New South Wales, every hour!

A rail / road intermodal terminal at Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and Casino to compliment the Enfield, Sydney intermodal terminal with a single freight rail line bypass in Sydney, would eliminate the need for the expensive Inland Rail infrastructure that includes an environmentally sensitive and expensive tunnel in Queensland. With signal upgrades the coastal network should easily accommodate six full length trains per hour, every hour! This capital could be redeployed to more lucrative infrastructure such as Sydney passenger transport, health services in Inland regions or encouraging manufacturing in regional areas.

Daily coastal shipping, for non urgent cargo, from Melbourne to Brisbane via Wollongong, Newcastle and Coffs Harbour would also reduce the pressure on the passenger rail network in New South Wales and avoid the significant environmental impact of providing an under utilised rail line that requires ongoing maintenance and generates significant heat in its near vicinity.

I suggest Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) is exploiting its position in the transport market and that an urgent review of the real economic value of Inland Rail by comparison to coastal shipping be undertaken. Like all of the proposed Inland Rail route, the Narrabri To North Star section is under populated and is likely to achieve a utilisation rate of a maximum of 10%, assuming 12 trains per day in each direction, taking a maximum of 5 minutes to pass a single point, meaning the rail line would be used for a maximum of 2 hours per day!

Custom ships could be built to perform the tasks, even utilising parts of existing locomotives and reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions footprint as coastal shipping is known to have less environmental impact than rail transport. There must even be potential to review available shipping assets in light of the collapse of Hanjin Shipping.

Having reviewed the annual report of Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) I do not believe that corporation is providing reliable and full information for its stakeholders on its rate of capital utilisation or rates of return. If port corporations in Australia were operated via a single federal corporate entity a more efficient solution would be achieved to redeploy investment capital where a higher real economic return could be achieved for all Australians.

Yours sincerely