

## PART A: Introduction







# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Inland Rail

The Australian Government has committed to delivering a significant piece of national transport infrastructure by constructing a high performance and direct interstate freight rail corridor between Melbourne and Brisbane, via central-west New South Wales (NSW) and Toowoomba in Queensland. Inland Rail is a major national project that will enhance Australia's existing national rail network and serve the interstate freight market.

The Inland Rail route, which is about 1,700 kilometres long, involves:

- ▶ using the existing interstate rail line through Victoria and southern NSW
- ▶ upgrading about 400 kilometres of existing track, mainly in western NSW
- ▶ providing about 600 kilometres of new track in northern NSW and south-east Queensland.

Inland Rail has been divided into 13 sections, seven of which are located in NSW.

Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd (ARTC) ('the proponent') has developed a ten-year programme to deliver Inland Rail. ARTC was created after the Australian and state governments agreed in 1997 to the formation of a 'one stop shop' for all operators seeking access to the national interstate rail network. Across its network, ARTC is responsible for:

- ▶ selling access to train operators
- ▶ developing new business
- ▶ capital investment in the corridors
- ▶ managing the network
- ▶ infrastructure maintenance.

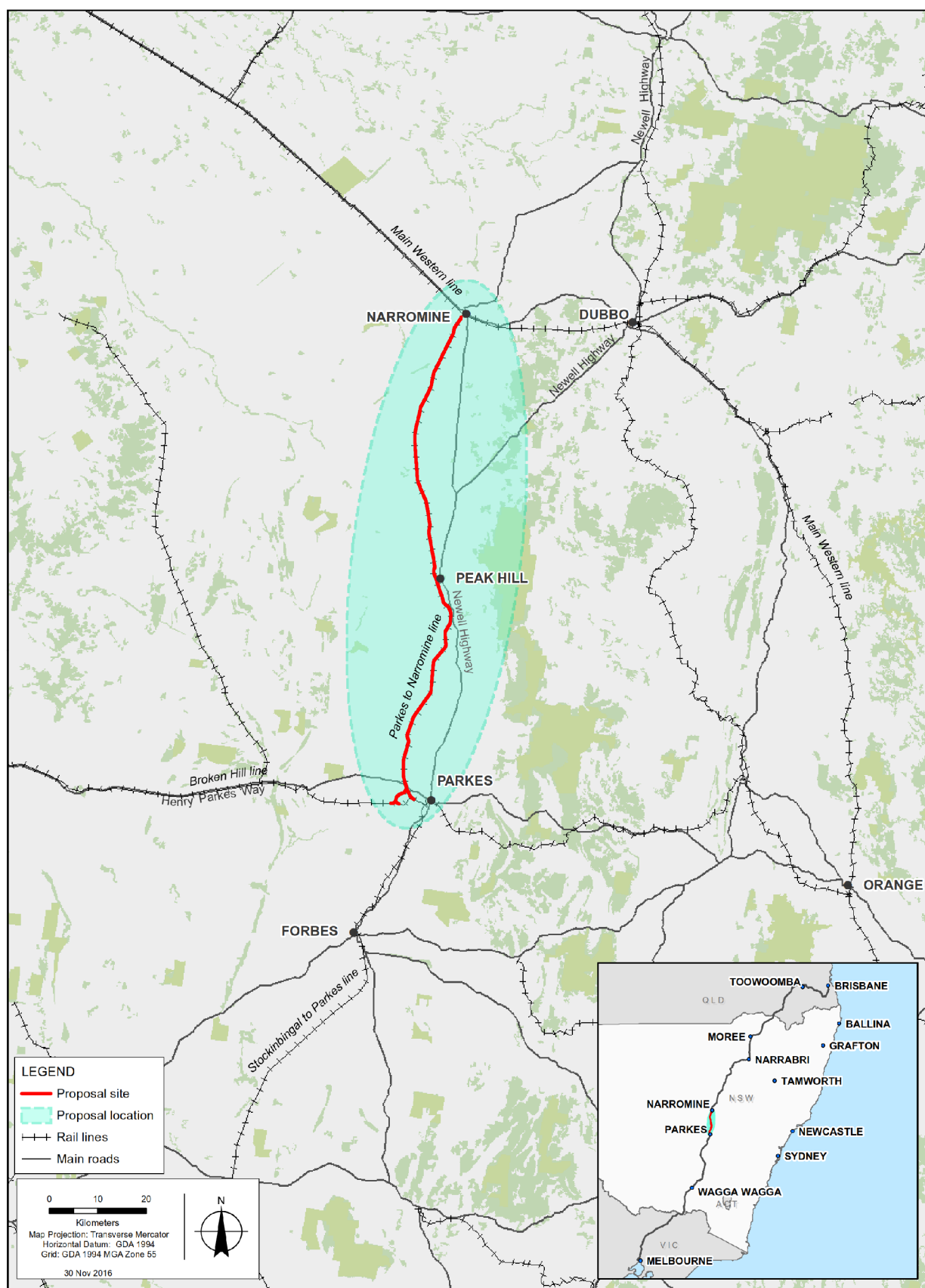
Further information on ARTC and Inland Rail can be found at [www.artc.com.au](http://www.artc.com.au) and [www.inlandrail.artc.com.au](http://www.inlandrail.artc.com.au).

## 1.2 The proposal

The proponent is seeking approval to construct and operate the **Parkes to Narromine section of Inland Rail** ('the proposal'), which consists of 106 kilometres of upgraded rail track and associated facilities. The proposal forms a key component of Inland Rail.

### 1.2.1 Location

The proposal is generally located in the existing rail corridor between the towns of Parkes and Narromine, via Peak Hill. In addition, a new connection to the Broken Hill rail line ('the Parkes north west connection') is proposed outside the existing rail corridor at the southern end of the proposal site near Parkes. The location of the proposal is shown in Figure 1.1. Further information on the location of the proposal and a description of the proposal site for the purposes of the EIS is provided in chapter 2.



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Data source: Commonwealth of Australia (Geoscience Australia), 250K Topographic Data Series 3, 2006.

**Figure 1.1**  
Location of the proposal

## 1.2.2 Key features

The key features of the proposal involve:

- ▶ upgrading the track, track formation, and culverts within the existing rail corridor for a distance of 106 kilometres between Parkes and Narromine
- ▶ realigning the track where required within the existing rail corridor to minimise tight curves
- ▶ providing three new crossing loops within the existing rail corridor, at Goonumbla, Peak Hill, and Timjelly
- ▶ providing a new 5.3 kilometre long rail connection to the Broken Hill line to the west of Parkes, ('the Parkes north west connection'), including a road bridge over the new section of rail at Brolgan Road ('the Brolgan Road overbridge').

The key features of the proposal are shown in Figure 1.2.

Ancillary work would include works to level crossings, signalling and communications, signage and fencing, and services and utilities within the proposal site.

The land requirement for the proposal will comprise the existing corridor with an average width of 30 metres, with some variation to accommodate particular infrastructure and to cater for local topography. The corridor will be of sufficient width to accommodate the infrastructure currently proposed for construction, as well as future expansion, including possible future requirement for 3,600 metre trains.

Proposal construction will be a single-track standard gauge railway, with crossing loops to accommodate double stacked freight trains up to 1,800 metres long. Components of the construction will include infrastructure to accommodate possible future augmentation and upgrades of the track, including a possible future requirement for 3,600 metre trains. Clearing of the corridor will occur to allow for construction and to maintain the safe operation of the railway.

The operational phase at year 2040 will be of a single track with crossing loops to accommodate double stacked freight trains up to 1,800 metres long. Impact assessment will be undertaken for the proposed development described in the *Inland Rail 2015 – Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail, Attachment A: ARTC 2015 Inland Rail Programme Business Case* (ARTC, 2015) for rail traffic and associated activities projected at the year 2040.

## 1.2.3 Timing and operation

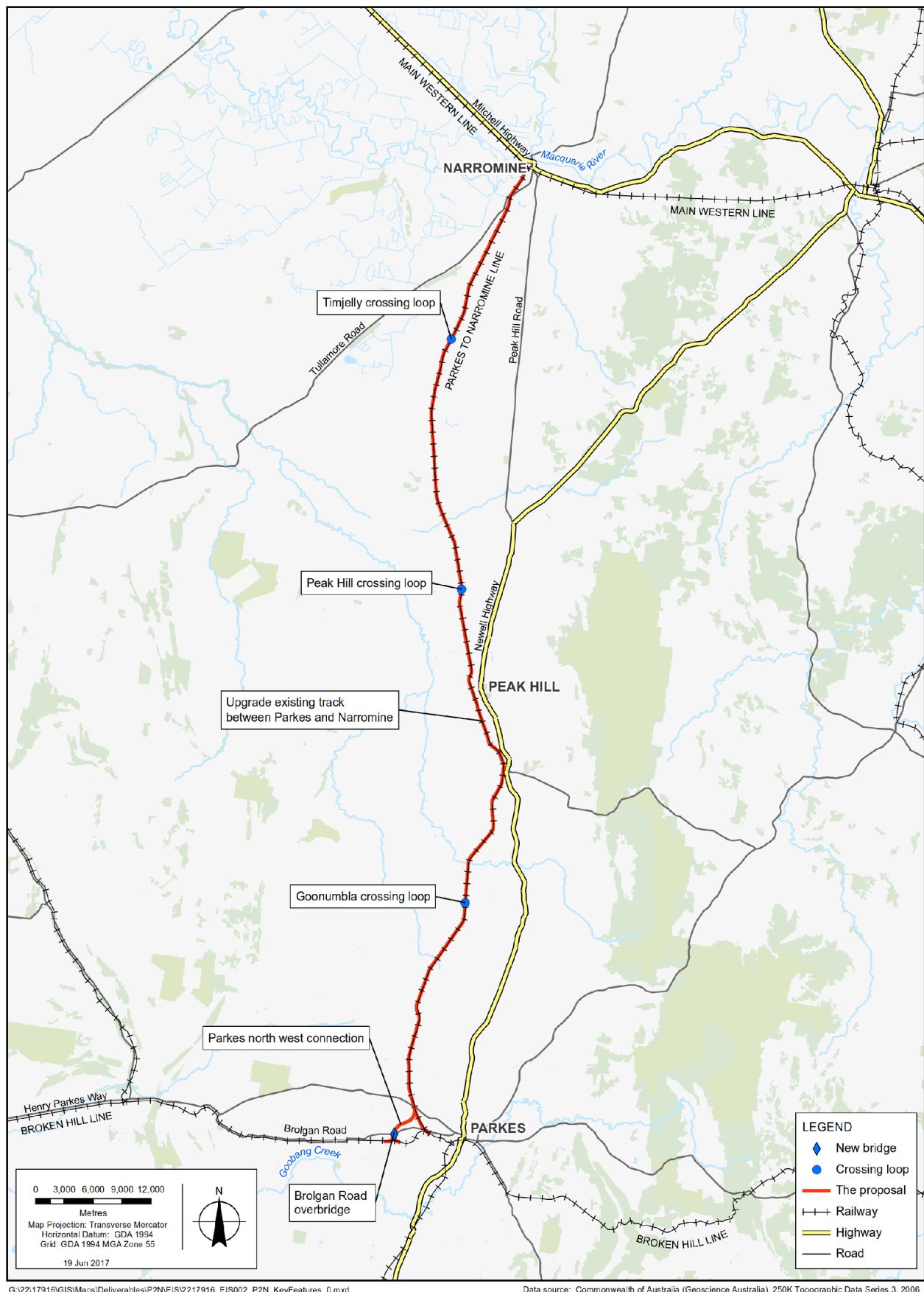
Subject to approval of the proposal, construction of the proposal is planned to start in early to mid 2018, and is expected to take about 18 months. Construction is expected to be completed in late 2019.

The proposal would form part of the rail network managed and maintained by ARTC. Train services would be provided by a variety of operators. Prior to the opening of Inland Rail as a whole, the rail line would be used by existing rail traffic, which includes trains carrying grain and ore at an average rate of about four trains per day.

Existing train operations along the Parkes to Narromine line would continue prior to, during, and following construction. Train numbers are not anticipated to significantly increase until all 13 sections of Inland Rail are complete, which is estimated to be in 2025.

It is estimated that the operation of Inland Rail would involve an annual average of about 8.5 trains per day in 2025, increasing to 15 trains per day in 2040. The trains would be a mix of grain, intermodal (freight), and other general transport trains. The EIS assesses the operational impacts of the use of the proposal as part of Inland Rail.

Further information on the proposal is provided in chapters 7 and 8.



**Figure 1.2**  
Key features of the proposal

## 1.3 Objectives of the proposal and Inland Rail

The objectives of the proposal are to:

- ▶ provide upgraded rail infrastructure that meets the Inland Rail specifications, to enable trains using the Inland Rail corridor to travel between Parkes and Narromine, connecting with other sections of Inland Rail to the north and south
- ▶ provide new rail infrastructure to connect Inland Rail to the Broken Hill line at Parkes, to enable trains using Inland Rail to connect with destinations in South Australia and Western Australia via the east-west trans-continental rail line
- ▶ minimise the potential for environmental and community impacts, by maximising use of the existing rail corridor.

The objectives of Inland Rail as a whole are to:

- ▶ provide a rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane that is interoperable with train operations to Perth, Adelaide, and other locations on the standard gauge rail network, to serve future rail freight demand, and stimulate growth for inter-capital and regional/bulk rail freight
- ▶ provide an increase in productivity that will benefit consumers through lower freight transport costs
- ▶ provide a step-change improvement in rail service quality in the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor and deliver a freight rail service that is competitive with road
- ▶ improve road safety, ease congestion, and reduce environmental impacts by moving freight from road to rail
- ▶ bypass bottlenecks within the existing metropolitan rail networks, and free up train paths for other services along the coastal route
- ▶ act as an enabler for regional economic development along the Inland Rail corridor.

## 1.4 EIS purpose and structure

This environmental impact statement (EIS) supports an application for approval of the proposal under Part 5.1 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). It addresses the environmental assessment requirements of the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment (the SEARs) dated 8 November 2016 (refer to Appendix A). The proposal is also a controlled action under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), and requires approval from the Australian Minister for the Environment and Energy. The EPBC Act assessment requirements are specified by the SEARs.

The EIS (volume 1) is structured in four parts as follows:

- ▶ **Part A Introduction** - including:
  - an introduction to the environmental assessment (**chapter 1**)
  - a description of the general biophysical and socio-economic environment within which the proposal would be located, including the regional setting and a description of the proposal site (**chapter 2**)
  - an overview of the statutory context for the proposal and the approval requirements (**chapter 3**)
  - a summary of the consultation that occurred during the proposal development and environmental assessment process, and the consultation proposed during public exhibition, detailed design, and delivery (**chapter 4**).
- ▶ **Part B The proposal** - including:
  - an overview of the strategic context and need for the proposal (**chapter 5**)
  - a summary of the alternatives to the proposal as a whole, and the options considered during development of the concept design for the proposal (**chapter 6**)

- a description of the proposal features and operation (**chapter 7**), including the approach to avoiding or minimising impacts, design features and infrastructure proposed, operation, maintenance, and other related information
- an indicative description of the likely construction process and activities (**chapter 8**).
- ▶ **Part C Environmental assessment** – including:
  - the results of the assessment of key environmental issues identified by the SEARs, including information on the existing environment, potential construction and operation impacts, and the proposed approach to mitigation and management (**chapters 9 to 26**).
- ▶ **Part D EIS synthesis** - including:
  - a consolidated summary of the key potential impacts, a description of the proposed approach to environmental management, and a compilation of the mitigation measures (**chapter 27**)
  - conclusion and justification for the proposal (**chapter 28**).

An assessment of environmental risks is provided in Appendix B of volume 1. The assessment was undertaken to provide a preliminary identification of the potential risks to be considered in more detail by the EIS. Other appendices in volume 1 provide supporting information and data.

The specialist technical reports prepared as an input to the EIS are provided in volumes 2 to 6.