

PART A

Introduction, project background
and description

INLAND
RAIL 



CHAPTER A4 Consultation



Narromine to Narrabri
Environmental Impact Statement

ARTC

The Australian Government is delivering
Inland Rail through the Australian
Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), in
partnership with the private sector.

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A4. Consultation

This chapter summarises the community and stakeholder consultation undertaken prior to and during preparation of the EIS, and the consultation proposed to be undertaken during design and delivery of the Narromine to Narrabri project (the proposal). The key issues relevant to the EIS are summarised. Further information is provided in the consultation report, included in Appendix C.

A4.1 Consultation approach

A4.1.1 Overall approach and objectives

ARTC developed a 10-year program to deliver Inland Rail, under the guidance of the Australian Government's Inland Rail Implementation Group. ARTC's values commit the organisation to active engagement with stakeholders and the community. ARTC's approach to communication and engagement is to:

- ▶ Ensure engagement activities meet the needs of the community and stakeholders
- ▶ Ensure project team members, stakeholders and the community understand their roles and responsibilities to deliver the Inland Rail Program
- ▶ Support the overall program objectives through active engagement.

The ARTC Inland Rail Communications and Engagement Strategy provides the overarching communications and engagement framework for the Inland Rail program. Effective communication and stakeholder engagement are fundamental to reducing risk, optimising route alignment, minimising social and environmental impacts, securing statutory approvals, and gaining and maintaining the social licence to operate.

ARTC is committed to active engagement in accordance with the IAP2 spectrum of public participation. ARTC's overarching strategy to communication and engagement is designed to:

- ▶ Build trust: through quality engagement and interactions with our primary stakeholders, including landowners and communities. Providing stakeholders with meaningful avenues for input and accurate honest information that allows them to have some certainty about what is happening and what they can expect so that they can make appropriate plans and decisions.
- ▶ Build credibility: through strong, timely engagement with key government and organisational stakeholders and communications to the wider community, including an increased focus on the positive events and milestones, and development.
- ▶ Build visibility: through broader communications and marketing, including active participation in, and/or support for, local and regional community events as well as broader industry conferences.

The strategic engagement principles that apply include:

- ▶ Timing—early and regular engagement
- ▶ Inclusivity—ensuring relevant stakeholders are consulted or involved
- ▶ Transparency—views and opinions captured from the public are reflected during the engagement process and are available to participants
- ▶ Equitability—relevant groups are included in the conversation with recognition of those voices that are not often heard as much as some others. This includes groups like traditional owners, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly.
- ▶ Accessibility—different socio-economic groups can participate
- ▶ Materiality—focus on identifying and addressing the issues that matter to stakeholders
- ▶ Responsiveness—including communication of how the engagement process has shaped the proposal, prior to each phase of engagement and delivery.

A4.1.2 Stakeholder identification

Understanding the local community and identifying stakeholders is critical to the success of Inland Rail and community engagement activities. A stakeholder is defined as any individual, group of individuals, organisation or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a decision. They may be, or perceive that they may be, affected directly or indirectly by the outcome of a decision.

The key stakeholder groupings for the proposal and the environmental assessment include:

- ▶ Elected government members (Australian, NSW and local government) and representatives of relevant government agencies and organisations, including statutory authorities and Narromine, Gilgandra, Coonamble, Warrumbungle and Narrabri councils
- ▶ Interest groups, including peak bodies, community, environment and other specialist groups
- ▶ Native title claimants, Indigenous groups/organisations and communities
- ▶ Landowners and landholders with properties that could be affected by the proposal
- ▶ Utility companies with assets that could be affected by the proposal
- ▶ Local/regional businesses
- ▶ The general public/local community.

Further information on stakeholders for Inland Rail and the proposal is provided in Appendix C.

A4.2 Consultation during the options development, design and environmental assessment process

Engagement with community and key stakeholders was carried out as part of the following key periods:

- ▶ Inland Rail announcement and preliminary consultation—2015 to end 2017
- ▶ Route option assessment—February 2018 to July 2019
- ▶ Preliminary design development and environmental assessment—July 2019 to October 2020.

The purpose of consultation was to raise awareness about Inland Rail and the proposal, understand community and stakeholder issues, and obtain important feedback to help shape the proposal's route, design and environmental assessment.

A summary of the activities and tools employed during the above stages is provided in Table A4.1. Further information is provided in Appendix C.

TABLE A4.1 CONSULTATION TOOLS

Consultation and communication tools	Purpose/summary	Timing
Contact mechanisms and recording		
Toll-free community information line (1800 732 761)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Enables responses for queries about the proposal▶ The line is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Community and engagement advisors take calls and direct queries to the appropriate person for a response.	Established Jan 2015, ongoing
Project email (inlandrailenquiries@artc.com.au) (inlandrailnsw@artc.com.au)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Online communication channel where stakeholders can ask questions, share their views, issues and concerns, provide feedback and request additional information.	Established 2014, ongoing
Consultation database	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Record all correspondence relating to the proposal, including feedback, concerns, and comments via Consultation Manager.	Established 2016, ongoing
Submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Submissions from councils and businesses have been invited to provide an opportunity for local knowledge and views to be shared with the proposal team.	As required

Consultation and communication tools	Purpose/summary	Timing
Proposal information		
Inland Rail website (inlandrail.artc.com.au)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness and understanding of the proposal ▶ Provide information to stakeholders, allowing them to ask questions, share their views, issues and concerns, and request additional information ▶ Includes minutes from Community Consultation Committee meetings, updated maps, newsletters, and historical documentation (such as route alignment documents) ▶ Updated, as required, to reflect the stages of the proposal. 	Established 2014, ongoing
Printed information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fact sheets ▶ Proposal information packs ▶ Mail outs ▶ Proposal maps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness and understanding of the proposal ▶ Provided to stakeholders to increase understanding of the proposal ▶ Provide information on land access guidelines and procedures ▶ Distributed to people on the mailing list and at communication sessions. 	Established 2016, ongoing
Stakeholder e-newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ E-newsletters sent to stakeholders to provide updates, invitations to community drop-in and information sessions ▶ Individuals can sign up for e-news updates online through ARTC's website or at public information displays. 	Established April 2019, as required
Emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promote engagement channels and opportunities to learn more about the proposal ▶ Promote when community feedback and inputs are required. 	As required
Local media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Advertisements ▶ Media releases ▶ Media briefings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness and understanding ▶ Provide information and promote channels through which stakeholders can communicate their views, issues and concerns ▶ Celebrate proposal milestones publicly. 	As required
Inland Rail social media using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness and understanding ▶ Provide information and promote channels through which stakeholders can communicate their views, issues and concerns ▶ Celebrate proposal milestones publicly. 	As required
Briefing papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provided to members of the NSW and Australian Government to outline key issues and strategies. 	As required
Meetings, information sessions and workshops		
Community Consultative Committee, with three sub-committees (Narromine, Gilgandra and Narrabri)	<p>The aim of the committee is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a forum for discussion about the proposal with representatives of the community, stakeholder groups and councils ▶ Facilitate broader community involvement ▶ Seek community feedback and input ▶ Increase awareness and understanding ▶ Act as a conduit between the project team and the community. <p>The committee has been established and is being operated with reference to the <i>Community Consultative Committee Guideline</i> (Department of Planning and Environment, 2019).</p> <p>Further information can be found at inlandrail.artc.com.au/community-consultative-committees.</p>	Established 2018, ongoing

Consultation and communication tools	Purpose/summary	Timing
Community information sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide information on the proposal to the local community ▶ Seek local input to inform the design process and EIS ▶ In September 2018, ARTC held eight town hall meetings and community information sessions. Meetings were held in Narrabri, Baradine, Gilgandra, Curban and Narromine. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the community of ongoing work for the proposal, request land access from landholders, and provide an opportunity for the community to meet the project team. ▶ In August 2019, ARTC held community information sessions in Narromine to allow local residents an opportunity to provide their feedback on preliminary design work ▶ In March 2020, ARTC held community information sessions at Narromine, Gilgandra, Baradine, Curban and Narrabri. The purpose of the sessions was to provide an update on the process of refining the route for the proposal and developing the focus area of investigation (see section A6.2.4). ▶ In October 2020, ARTC held community information sessions at Narromine, Gilgandra, Curban, Coonamble, Baradine and Narrabri to update the community on the final corridor and upcoming public exhibition of the EIS ▶ Where applicable, feedback received from the sessions was used to inform the design and EIS process. 	Commenced 2018, held as required
Landholder meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness of the proposal and the potential impacts on landholders ▶ Provide an opportunity for landholders to ask questions and have input into the design and EIS ▶ In February 2018, ARTC conducted about 200 face-to-face meetings with landholders who owned property or resided in the study area. The purpose of these meetings was to provide information on the process of developing the reference design and EIS. ▶ Between July 2019 and February 2020, ARTC met with about 100 landholders within the focus area of investigation. Discussions included the location of the focus area of investigation, preliminary flood modelling results and level crossing matters. ARTC also contacted landholders residing in the study area outside the focus area of investigation. ▶ Between July and October 2020, ARTC met with landholders directly affected by the final rail corridor. At these meetings, landholders were provided with updated property maps, showing the location of the final rail corridor. The meetings also covered flood modelling results (flood levels with the proposal), operational noise, access, visual impacts, property acquisition and construction infrastructure. The project team also met with indirectly impacted landowners to discuss construction infrastructure, operational noise, access, hydrology and visual impacts. 	Commenced 2018, ongoing
Stakeholder meetings and briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunity to address specific questions and issues in person ▶ Provide an opportunity for stakeholder input to inform the design process and development of the EIS ▶ In September 2018, ARTC distributed an updated project newsletter to Narromine, Gilgandra, Warrumbungle, Coonamble and Narrabri councils ▶ Between July 2019 and February 2020, ARTC met with local and NSW government agencies, community and business groups, and other key stakeholders. 	Commenced 2018, held as required

Consultation and communication tools	Purpose/summary	Timing
'Pop up' stalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide information about the proposal to the local community ▶ Seek local input to inform the design process and EIS. 	June 2019
Draft EIS stakeholder briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Five online briefings were held during August 2020 with the Community Consultative Committee; Australian, NSW and local government agencies; and the general public. Excluding the committee briefing, 94 people attended. ▶ The briefings included provision of information on the proposal and the EIS, with a focus on key potential impacts, including biodiversity, Aboriginal heritage, flooding and hydrology, water resources, noise and vibration (construction and operation), land use and property, socio-economic impacts, and traffic and access. 	3 to 6 August 2020

A4.3 Summary of issues raised and responses to feedback received

A4.3.1 Where issues relevant to the EIS have been addressed

A summary of the key issues raised during consultation relevant to the EIS, including the potential impacts to be considered and the information to be provided by the EIS, is provided in Table A4.2. More detailed information on the issues raised by stakeholders is provided in Appendix C.

TABLE A4.2 SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED RELEVANT TO THE EIS

Issue category	Issues raised	Where addressed in the EIS
Proposal information and background		
Proposal scope and route	▶ Queries about what the proposal involves and where is it located	Chapters A7 and A8
	▶ Queries about how the study area was selected and then refined to the focused area of investigation and rail corridor	Sections A6.2.3 and A6.2.4
	▶ Interest in how the route was selected	Sections A6.1.3 and A6.2
	▶ Queries about why existing rail lines or paper road reserves were not used for the route	Sections A6.1.3 and A6.2
	▶ Queries about why the proposal goes through flood prone areas and ground that isn't suitable for construction	Section A6.2
	▶ Interest in opportunities for local connectivity, including for towns like Coonamble	Appendix C
	▶ Queries about cost	Appendix C
Proposal design and features	▶ Interest in whether the current design takes into account future traffic conditions	Section A7.2.2
	▶ Concerns about level crossing design and safety	Sections A6.3.3, A7.3.7 and chapter B11
	▶ Queries about crossing loop locations	Section A7.3.3
	▶ Queries about bridge locations	Section A7.3.4
Proposal need	▶ Queries about the need and purpose of the proposal	Chapter A5
Consultation	▶ Queries about consultation undertaken	This chapter
	▶ Queries about who to contact if there is property damage during construction	Section A4.4.2
Acquisition process	▶ Queries about what the property acquisition process involves, timing and compensation entitlements	Sections A7.5 and B12.5
Construction	▶ When will construction commence and how long will it take?	Section A8.8.1
	▶ Where will accommodation for construction workers be provided?	Section A8.9.4
	▶ Queries about construction water sources	Sections A6.3.5 and A8.10.2

Issue category	Issues raised	Where addressed in the EIS
Operation	▶ How many trains per day?	Section A7.7.1
	▶ How will the alignment be maintained and by who?	Section A7.7.2
	▶ Will there be a regular timetable for trains?	Section A7.7.1
Potential issues and impacts		
Biodiversity	▶ Impacts on the Pilliga forests	Sections B1.3 and B12.3.4
Water resources	▶ Impacts on private bores	Sections B2.3.3 and B2.4.3
Flooding and hydrology	▶ Queries about the information used to produce the flood models	Section B3.1.2
	▶ Impacts on flooding	Sections B3.3.1 and B3.4.1
Traffic, transport and access	▶ Property access impacts	Sections B11.3, B11.4, B12.3 and B12.4
	▶ Construction traffic management, including access to the rail corridor	Sections B11.3 and 11.5
	▶ Construction traffic damage to roads	Section B11.3
	▶ Access for emergency vehicles across the rail corridor	Sections B11.5, B14.3.4 and B14.4.3
Noise	▶ Construction noise and vibration	Chapter B8, sections C1.3.3, C2.3.7 and C3.3.5
	▶ Operation noise and vibration	Chapter B9
Air quality	▶ Construction air quality impacts	Sections B10.3, C1.3.4, C2.3.8 and C3.3.6
Land use, property and agriculture	▶ Impacts on private infrastructure, e.g. dams	Section B12.3.6 and B12.4.6
	▶ Impacts on farming operations during construction and operation	Sections B12.3.3 and B12.4.2
	▶ Impacts on stock movements across the rail corridor	Sections B12.3.3 and B12.4.2
	▶ Responsibilities if a train hits stock, and insurance requirements to cover stock accidents	Appendix C
	▶ Implications if the proposal affects the operations of a property and/or business	Sections B12.3 to B12.5
	▶ Weed management during construction and operation, including responsibility for the management of weeds in the rail corridor	Sections B1.5.2, B12.3.3, B12.4.2 and B12.5.2
	▶ Impacts on bushfire management in the Pilliga forests	Section B12.3.4
	▶ Impacts on, and access to, travelling stock reserves	Sections B12.3.5 and B12.4.5
Visual	▶ Light impacts from night-time train operations	Section B13.4.3
Socio-economic impacts	▶ Local and regional business and community benefits from construction and operation	Section B14.3.6, B14.4.5 and C2.3.11
Cumulative impacts	▶ Cumulative impacts with surrounding projects	Chapter D1

A4.3.2 How the proposal has responded to the inputs received

The proposal's route, reference design and construction methodology has been developed to avoid and minimise impacts on the local and regional environment, and impacts on the community and landholders, as far as practicable. The consultation that has been undertaken to date has contributed to the project team's understanding of the potential impacts and has enabled the design to respond to, and minimise, potential impacts, where practicable. Measures to minimise and manage impacts that cannot be avoided have been developed as an outcome of the environmental assessment process, as described in Part B. Impacts would continue to be minimised throughout the detailed design and construction planning phases, taking into account the input of stakeholders and the local community.

The route selection process (see chapter A6) included consideration of potential environmental and social issues, including issues raised during consultation. Further information on the options considered and justifications for the options selected is provided in chapter A6.

The reference design process has evolved over a period of about two and half years, and has involved many iterations and refinements, incorporating a range of considerations at each stage. Key environmental issues were considered throughout the design development process. Consultation has been carried out with affected stakeholders to identify key potential impacts at an early stage. Where practicable, impacts have been avoided or appropriate mitigation measures developed in response to this input. This has resulted in a number of design changes that have mitigated some of the potentially significant impacts. Further information about this process is provided in sections A7.2 and A8.1.

Examples of design refinements and construction commitments that have been adopted for the proposal based on feedback received include:

- ▶ Areas of existing vegetation were avoided as far as practicable
- ▶ Bridges and culvert lengths were extended over floodplains at a number of locations to minimise the potential for increased flooding impacts on properties
- ▶ The location of the bridge over the Macquarie River was determined with consideration of known Aboriginal heritage sites and, where practicable, it avoided these sites
- ▶ The alignment was modified at South Narromine, Black Hollow, Curban (between Berida Road and the Castlereagh Highway) where an alternative route location was available with a lower potential for community impacts
- ▶ The proposed locations of the temporary workforce accommodation have been developed in consultation with councils, to maximise the potential for economic benefits to towns in the study area and minimise the potential for social impacts
- ▶ To minimise impacts on properties, construction areas would be accessed via existing roads together with the proposed haul roads within the proposal site.

A4.4 Future consultation

A4.4.1 Consultation during exhibition of the EIS

As described in section A3.2.5, the EP&A Act requires exhibition of an EIS for a minimum of 28 days. The EIS will be placed on public exhibition by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and submissions will be invited. The EIS will be made available for viewing on the Department's Major Projects website and the Inland Rail website.

Subject to COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, copies of the EIS will be made available for viewing at the following locations:

- ▶ Narromine Shire Council
- ▶ Gilgandra Shire Council
- ▶ Warrumbungle Shire Council
- ▶ Coonamble Shire Council
- ▶ Narrabri Shire Council.

To support public exhibition and provide opportunities for the community and stakeholders to ask questions and find out more information before making a submission, a range of consultation and communication tools will be used, including:

- ▶ Dedicated phone number, email address and project website (see Table A4.1)
- ▶ Media releases and advertisements in the local media
- ▶ Social media updates
- ▶ Newsletters, information brochures and fact sheets
- ▶ Stakeholder briefings
- ▶ Community information sessions.

Submissions are made to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. At the completion of the public exhibition period, the Department will provide ARTC with a copy of all submissions. ARTC will deal with submissions received in accordance with the requirements of the EP&A Act and Regulation. A submissions report will be prepared responding to the issues raised and will be made available for viewing on the Major Projects website. ARTC will continue to liaise directly with stakeholders regarding the proposal's progress. If changes to the proposal need to be made, a preferred infrastructure report will be prepared.

While all submissions received will be posted on the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website, if requested, the privacy of submitters will be protected by removing names from submissions.

A4.4.2 Consultation during design and delivery of the proposal

Consultation and community feedback

Comprehensive and appropriate communication and consultation with the community and other key stakeholders will play a key role in managing the potential for impacts during detailed design, construction and operation. Effective communication and engagement are fundamental to reducing risk and minimising potential impacts. Identifying, engaging and effectively communicating with stakeholders is critical to the successful delivery of the proposal.

ARTC would continue to engage with stakeholders and the community in the lead up to, and during, construction. A communication management plan would be developed for the construction phase to ensure that:

- ▶ Landowners/landholders and community members with the potential to be affected by construction activities are notified in a timely manner about the timing of activities and potential for impacts
- ▶ Enquiries and complaints are managed and a timely response is provided for concerns raised
- ▶ Accurate and accessible information is made available
- ▶ Feedback from the community is encouraged
- ▶ Opportunities for input are provided where appropriate.

The contact facilities (including 1800 phone number and email address) would continue to be available during construction, along with a 24-hour construction response line. Targeted consultation methods, such as letters, notifications, signage and face-to-face communications, would continue to be used. The Inland Rail website and social media platforms would also include updates on the progress of the proposal.

Other communication tools and activities that would be used in the lead up to, and during, construction include:

- ▶ A community complaints and response management system (see below)
- ▶ Notifications regarding work outside standard working hours and work that might impact residents, businesses and stakeholders
- ▶ Email/SMS updates
- ▶ Newsletters, information brochures and fact sheets
- ▶ Regular community updates on the progress of the construction program
- ▶ Meetings with key stakeholders, as needed
- ▶ Traffic alerts
- ▶ Site signage around construction facilities.

Complaints management

A complaints management system would be developed and implemented before construction begins. It would be maintained throughout the construction period and for a minimum of 12 months after construction finishes. The complaints management system would include the following at a minimum:

- ▶ A 24-hour, 7 days a week response line for complaints and enquiries
- ▶ A postal and email address to which complaints and enquiries may be sent
- ▶ Publication of contact details in local newspapers and proposal website
- ▶ Management of complaints in accordance with ARTC's complaints management procedure and the conditions of approval for the proposal, including:
 - ▶ Steps to receive, manage and take appropriate action in relation to community enquiries and complaints
 - ▶ Verbal and written responses describing what action will be taken provided to the complainant within agreed time limits
 - ▶ A complaints register to record all enquiries, complaints and contact with community members and stakeholders.
- ▶ A system for managing unresolved complaints
- ▶ Reporting requirements in accordance with the conditions of approval.