

7th February 2021

The Hon. Rob Stokes
Minister for Planning and Public Space
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Dear Minister Stokes

**Please find following our objections to the Environmental Impact Statement for SSI-9487
Inland Rail – Narromine to Narrabri**

INTRODUCTION

I am a 49 year old fourth-generation farmer, married with three teenage children from the Coboco district, approximately 45 km north west of Dubbo NSW. I work with my wife and father who still actively works on the farm at the age of 82. Both Dad and I have worked here our entire lives.

Our properties total 1,809 Ha . We run a mixed farming enterprise consisting of growing cereal/legume crops, beef cattle, sheep for meat and wool production. These operations are conducted on all our properties with no particular enterprise segregated to any one part, and it changes year to year.

We have been very involved along with several other farmers in our district and the NSW Farmer's Association/CWA in trying to make The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) accountable for decisions made since 2016 and earlier which has taken up considerable time, money and resources as well as the effect on our mental health especially through a prolonged three year drought which was the worst in our memory.

The majority of our properties are located adjacent to the Old Mill Road in the Burroway to Curban section of the Narromine to Narrabri (N2N) greenfield section of the proposed Inland Rail alignment.

The original property "Beltana" was a soldier's settlement block taken up by my Grandfather after returning from World War 1 in 1922 where he was wounded in battle and left for dead.

We are members of the NSW Farmers Association and have joined the Collective between them and the CWA which is being represented by Law firm Holding Redlich who have lodged a submission to the EIS on the Collective's behalf. We fully support the submission that has been lodged by them, and additional to this are some of the objections particularly concerning us with the ARTC's Environment Impact Statement (EIS).

1) CONSULTATION

Consultation Approach (see A4.1.1)

The ARTC's account of their Consultation Approach in the EIS is a misrepresentation of what actually occurred as they failed to do it, especially in the Burroway to Curban section of N2N.

They have left most of the community not trusting or believing anything they said to the point where many of us have left off engaging with them!

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

They (ARTC) state the Inland Rail website was updated as required which did not occur as evidenced by the fact that the MCA Workshop Report of 15th December 2016 only appeared around June 2018, some 18 months later.

ARTC also advised landowners that the 11th May MCA Workshop report would be made available before Federal Minister Darren Chester signed off on the Preferred Study Corridor which occurred on the 7th November 2017. This did not happen along with the N2N Options Report which were not made available until after the event!

2) ROUTE SELECTION

We refute ARTC's account under Alternatives and options (A6) and their Options Assessment (A6.2.3 Phase 1 concept design assessment) and find their alignment refinement process which was poorly managed and piecemeal at best and unacceptable, especially in our section, Burroway to Curban of N2N of such a significant piece of costly infrastructure.

In the EIS the ARTC claim that following the December 2016 MCA workshop that over 400 meetings were held with landholders, local councils, government agencies and other key stakeholders. Additional field surveys were also completed and feedback from these was considered in the final MCA held in May 2017.

ARTC need to provide evidence that these meetings and surveys took place if their reports and recommendations are to be believed especially in our Burroway to Curban section.

If evidence is not forthcoming the Department of Planning cannot accept their version of events to be a true account of what transpired.

This December 2016 MCA report included four other options (109, 108, 112 & 113) in the Burroway to Curban section of N2N that the community was unaware of. **We state again, this report never became public until June 2018 after the community had started questioning their findings.**

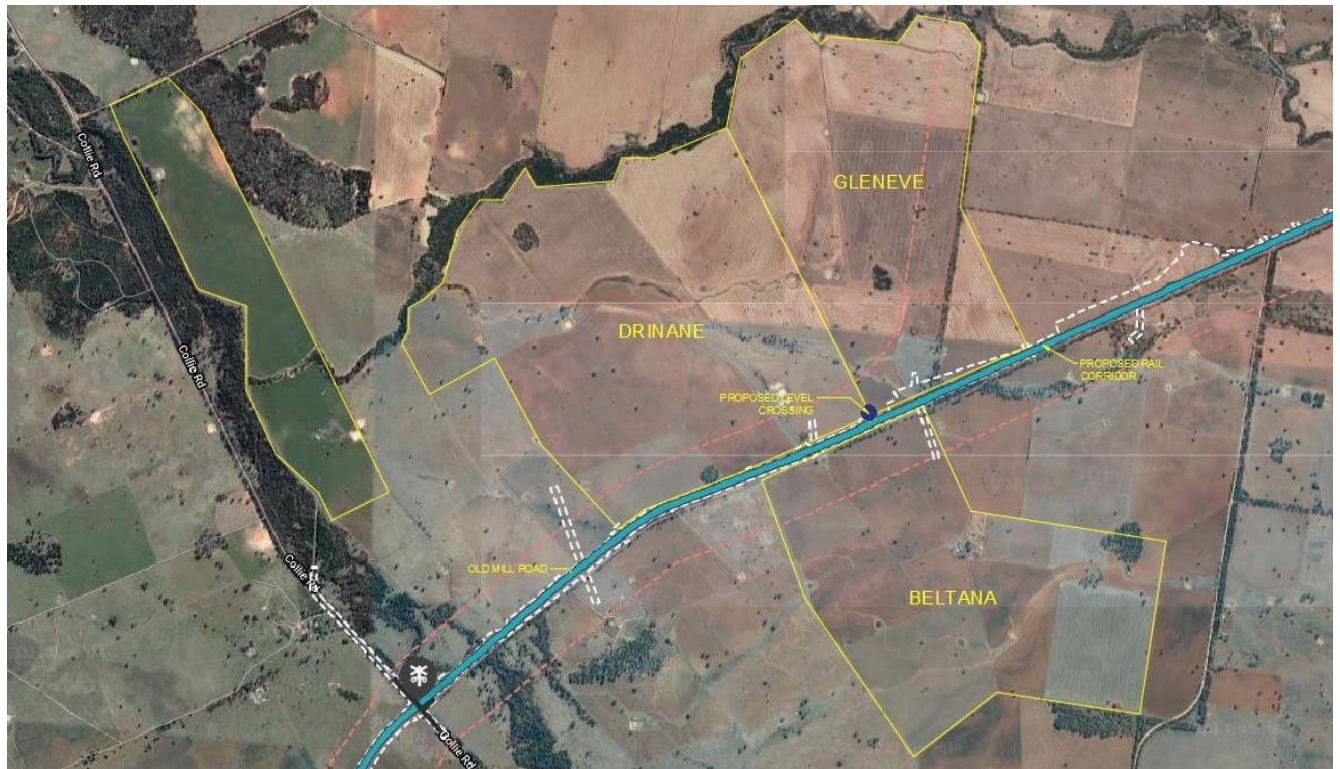
Once the report became available Option 109 (Paper Road) was found to be taken forward for further community consultation in the first quarter of 2017. **This did not happen as ARTC consulted on another option which they thought was it (Option 109) but in fact was the Gilmour's Road Alternative about four kilometres to the west. This resulted in Minister Chester signing off on a study corridor that was incorrect!**

When this was brought to their attention, the ARTC have tried to cover it up. They have even released the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Route History 2006-2019 in an attempt to mask over mistakes to justify their decisions when there are clearly discrepancies between this and the earlier MCA reports which are the basis of route selection, especially for our section - Burroway to Curban.

3) ACCESS & SEVERANCE

As it stands the majority of our infrastructure (silos, sheds, sheep and cattle yards) are located on our original property “Beltana” which is 360Ha and situated on the southern side of the Old Mill Road /proposed rail alignment. Two other properties purchased later “Gleneve” and “Drinane” consisting of 1046 Ha make up the majority of our land holdings, located on the northern side of the Old Mill Road which will be dissected by the Inland Rail route running adjacent to the Old Mill Road.

See picture below:



Currently we have eight access points to our properties to the north and the ARTC have given us one passive level crossing on the common boundary between “Gleneve” and “Drinane”. This is located in a watercourse that does become very inundated in wet times.

At present we cross between these properties several times a day, and more during busier times such as harvest, planting & shearing. We move heavy machinery, trucks (road trains), utes, motorbikes and stock (sheep/cattle).

This has the potential to make our farming operation unworkable and more costly if we have restricted access to the majority of our land.

During the construction phase how does the ARTC propose we access our property severed by the construction as there is no provision for it in the EIS only that these would continue to consult in the detailed design phase and minimise the potential for impacts.

After dealings with the ARTC in the past they just can't be trusted!

CONCLUSION

We urge the Minister to refuse the ARTC application for the N2N State Significant Infrastructure in the strongest possible terms as the project should have never progressed into the Phase 2 Reference design assessment.

The ARTC's account of consultation and route selection especially in the Burroway to Curban section of N2N is incorrect and a misrepresentation of the truth.

The application should be refused on this alone and they should be sent back to start a fully transparent consultation process for N2N from the beginning with it being independently scrutinised which also includes an up to date review of the costings and business case for the whole project.

Finally, we thank the Minister for taking the time to consider our submission on the EIS for the Inland Rail N2N Project.

Yours Sincerely

Stephen, Debbie and Don Campion
"Beltana"
1667 Old Mill Road
Dubbo NSW 2830