

**Submission  
No 9**

## **INLAND RAIL PROJECT AND REGIONAL NSW**

**Organisation:** Dubbo Regional Council

**Date Received:** 3 February 2021



The Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development

The Chair, Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development,  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000.

## **INQUIRY INTO THE INLAND RAIL PROJECT AND REGIONAL NSW**

Dubbo Regional Council, is pleased to be able to provide input into the Inquiry into the Inland Rail Project and Regional NSW. As a large regional Council servicing a growing community of over 50,000 people, with an operating expenditure budget of approximately \$200 million, we have 600 team members working across a diverse range of areas including planning, infrastructure, community and cultural services, administration, economic development, corporate business and recreational services and actively support the ongoing growth and economic development of not only the Dubbo Region, but the wider NSW Region which it services.

In particular, the Dubbo economy despite critical and significant drought, has performed strongly over recent years with evidence that parts of the economy are operating at close to full capacity. With a large pipeline of significant infrastructure and construction projects planned for the region and low levels of unemployment, sitting under 2% for the Dubbo Region encompassing Dubbo and Wellington, it is expected that some industry sectors will suffer from a significant shortage of skilled staff over the next few years, unless strategies are put in place to support economic growth. Data gathered highlights that the regional economy is strong, with low levels of unemployment and there is potential that future growth in construction, infrastructure and heavy industry may be significantly constrained due to high potential demand and a low supply of workers, which means that opportunities for Regional growth that are presented through major projects like Inland Rail, will not provide tangible or ongoing benefit to Regional NSW.

Please see below headings that address the terms of reference that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development will be addressing. Proactive in the overall growth and development of the Dubbo Region, whilst the below is general in nature there are a selection of studies around transport development (Airport) and skills and workforce attraction that should the Inquiry be interested in, Council would be happy to provide or speak further too. In addition, Dubbo



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Regional Council would be pleased to speak with any representatives regarding any of the below commentary should it be helpful to the overall enquiry.

***Economic development opportunities arising from the project:***

Whilst the Dubbo Regional Council area is not directly impacted by the Inland Rail construction, it is the neighbouring LGA to three of the Council areas of Parkes, Narromine and Gilgandra which are directly impacted. The City of Dubbo is also the major service centre for populations and businesses in these impacted LGA's which means that the construction does offer opportunities for the Dubbo Region.

**Export**

The Dubbo City Regional Airport services a large geographic area of NSW, and the impacts of the 2020 COVID Pandemic have meant significant negative impacts on the Airports ability to make a profitable income and this could be said for many Airports across Australia. The ability for diversification of business would be a significantly positive outcome of this type of transport infrastructure. If the Inland Rail could work with other types of transport to engage in the strengthening of all Regional industries and support the possible air-export market. This would involve the financial support of infrastructure development of supporting transport industries and maintenance funding to ensure that connective transport lines for Regional NSW are able to support industries expanding into export markets.

**Warehousing**

Whilst the line will provide efficiencies, there will be a level of warehousing required while containers wait to get onto the Inland Rail line, this will happen across the full rail line, not just in the major centres such as Parkes and Narrabri. To support the ability of industry to access the line, warehousing will need to be supported along the line to enable produce to be adequately stored and timetables of small businesses to be maintained and supported.

**Workforce attraction and development**

The efficiencies provided by Inland Rail should also enable businesses in Regional NSW to look at how they can grow their business. This should enable efficiencies and new technologies to be implemented into Regional NSW businesses, which require workforce training support and workforce attraction. The Dubbo Regional Council area has got significantly low unemployment in order for the Region to support the growth of business and the diversification of business and engagement with technology it needs to be supported through holistic skills attraction. Dubbo Regional Council currently works in partnership with Narromine and Gilgandra Councils on skills attraction but this targeted skills attraction partnership is not an ongoing funded piece of work, the need will be amplified during and post Inland Rail construction and needs ongoing financial support.

***Infrastructure required to ensure regional communities benefit from the project***

**Connectivity to existing infrastructure** significant investment has been made into the highway and road networks around Dubbo and surrounding LGAs, the role of transport to the Dubbo Region economy is also significant. The development of the Inland Rail needs to compliment this offering, enable warehousing and intermodal transport particularly to the major centres along the Inland Rail Line that

service large populations and that act as transportation hubs such as Dubbo.

**Community infrastructure support** in the surrounding localities to the Inland Rail are imperative to the ongoing growth of regional areas. Whilst the Inland Rail has the potential to create business efficiencies, it also then has the potential to centralise employment of skilled persons back into the metro localities and those people then provide service as FIFO/DIDO employees when required along the line. The potential of this large scale construction project is that people can become settled in regional areas, such as Dubbo, Narromine, Gilgandra, Wellington and alike but to maintain these new residents, support need to be provided to the maintenance of the regional centres. The servicing of residential needs and wants such as community infrastructure, entertainment and business growth is imperative to making sure that Regional Centres see an ongoing legacy from the Inland Rail Project. As mentioned in workforce attraction and development Dubbo Regional Council currently works in partnership with Narromine and Gilgandra Councils on skills attraction but this targeted skills attraction partnership is not an ongoing funded piece of work, the need will be amplified during and post Inland Rail construction and needs ongoing financial support.

***Engagement with regional communities to identify opportunities***

Ongoing engagement throughout development and into operations is an imperative to the success and ongoing usage of the line for the benefit of all Regional NSW. Provision of information and knowledge gives confidence and can encourage an effective collaborative approach to the development of programs and business practises for the mutual benefit of those involved. In turn, regular engagement ensures the successful delivery of relevant government related strategies with real outcomes for Regional challenges and opportunities.

Yours faithfully

*Dubbo Regional Council*  
Manager, Economic Development and Marketing