

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

**Organisation:** Infrastructure Partnerships Australia

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Mr Justin Clancy MP

Chair

Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development

Parliament House

6 Macquarie Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Via email: [investmentindustry@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:investmentindustry@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Clancy

## **RE: INQUIRY INTO THE INLAND RAIL PROJECT AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES**

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is pleased to provide this submission to the Committee on the role of Inland Rail in supporting growth in regional New South Wales and the broader national economy.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is an independent think tank and executive member network, providing research focused on excellence in social and economic infrastructure. We exist to shape public debate and drive reform for the national interest.

### **Now Inland Rail is underway, governments should focus on maximising public value**

The Inland Rail project is a nationally significant undertaking, representing one of the most significant investments ever made in regional Australia. Inland Rail has been assessed as a Priority Project by Infrastructure Australia. The project could deliver broad-ranging benefits by supporting growth in regional industries, boosting export opportunities, improving the efficiency of the freight network and supporting decarbonisation efforts by moving some freight from road to rail.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia acknowledges the significant public resources already invested in Inland Rail, and that significant progress has already been made on delivering the project. In this context, we advocate for the Inquiry to focus on how the New South Wales Government can seek to maximise the project's benefits and leverage the investment made on behalf of taxpayers to create lasting public value over the long term. There is a range of measures the government could put in place to 'back in' the project, which is the focus of this submission.

### **Inland Rail should be integrated within broader planning processes**

Simply delivering the Inland Rail project is not enough. Governments should use the project as a catalyst for transformation of freight networks and supply chains, as well as regional precincts along the project's alignment.

As a key part of the *National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy Action Plan*, it is imperative governments coordinate their efforts to fully realise the public benefits of the project. Key actions should include optimisation of hubs along the route, including settling on a strategy for key intermodal facilities and how they will integrate with other freight services, as well as the development of localised strategies for supporting demand for Inland Rail, catalysing export market opportunities and maximising private investment along the route.

Governments should also engage regional communities on opportunities arising from Inland Rail, ensuring developments are aligned with the distinct needs of these regional communities.

The New South Wales Government's development of Special Activation Precincts (SAPs) provides a good model for planning commercial and economic opportunities created by Inland Rail. In particular, the Parkes SAP provides an effective framework for coordinating public and private developments in the area around Inland Rail, as well as engaging local communities and ensuring efficient access to infrastructure services. The development of further SAPs, including those planned in Wagga Wagga, Narrabri and Moree, should build on the success of the model.

The New South Wales Government should also ensure there is alignment of planning and commercial strategies around Inland Rail with existing planning processes. As part of this, it is imperative the New South Wales Government delivers the range of commitments listed in the *New South Wales Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023*, many of which aim to leverage the delivery of Inland Rail to drive regional growth in the state.

### **Governments can do more to support private investment around Inland Rail**

A key measure of the success of Inland Rail will be in how the project catalyses private investment along the route. SAPs can go some way to providing clarity about the areas around key hubs. However, for the project to realise its potential to attract and stimulate business activity, the private sector require certainty about delivery of the project. At a time when infrastructure investment is increasingly seen as an economic lever, the government is in a position to stimulate activity through delivery certainty of Inland Rail.

It is also important for governments to provide clarity about the policy measures they will put in place around the project. This will ensure local businesses and communities have the time and capacity to adapt to the opportunities Inland Rail brings, and to make any related investments or commercial changes with confidence.

Inter-governmental coordination is also key for project delivery and private sector confidence. The New South Wales Government should work closely with the Federal, Queensland and Victorian Governments to ensure there is a joined-up approach to realising the benefits of the project.

### **The project should be future-proofed through corridor preservation**

It is also imperative that the corridor and strategic lands around the project are adequately future-proofed. Freight corridor preservation should be undertaken to ensure urban encroachment does not give rise to demands for artificial throttling of capacity in the future, and does not prevent future development of Inland Rail and its key intermodal connections. This is supported by the *National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy Action Plan*, which lists Inland Rail as a key freight corridor that must be protected from encroachment.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. Should you require further information please contact Mr Jon Frazer, Director of Policy and Research on [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

**ADRIAN DWYER**  
Chief Executive Officer