

**Submission
No 34**

INLAND RAIL PROJECT AND REGIONAL NSW

Name: Mr Alan Channell

Date Received: 9 February 2021

My property was in the N2N study area. I am a member of the N2N Narromine CCC. I am also a retired plant mechanic. I completed my apprenticeship with the New South Wales Government Railways and have worked with all the NSW rail track maintenance gangs including ARTC.

I struggle to comprehend how a Government authority (ARTC) can submit an official document (EIS) knowing that their own historical documentation proves that a great deal of the facts in that report are false or misleading.

At a large community meeting held at Narromine, and recorded by a TV crew from Prime TV, ARTC informed the community that they were now going to build the Inland Rail that was originally surveyed in 2010. It will eventually carry 3 Km. long, double stacked trains and travel in excess of 110 kph.

A major requirement was to move freight from Melbourne to Brisbane in 24 Hours. They identified that the quickest and shortest time between 2 points was a straight line. The track was going to be "future proofed" and have no level crossings over major roads. It was going to pass around Narromine on the **Western** side and then travel 300 km through farmland to Narrabri.

This **Western** route was again positively verified in late 2018 by ARTC to a group of concerned residents outside the local supermarket.

A short time later in December 2018, at my home visit, ARTC informed me that my property was now (*suddenly*) in a new study area for the line to pass Narromine on the **Eastern** side.

This new alignment has 2 right angle bends. One, to change direction from North to East off the Tomingley – Narromine line and then a short way along another to turn back North again to bypass Narromine. It also requires 2 additional **road over rail** crossings. One to cross over the Tomingley - Narromine road and a 2nd to cross back over the Narromine- Eumungerie road, to get back onto the correct side. Both roads form the Newell Highway's heavy vehicle Dubbo bypass and carry a large volume of trucks. This alignment must negotiate over the Backwater Cowal. Plus, a large flood plain caused by water shedding off the Sappa Bulga Range, and the Macquarie River breakout point at Webbs Siding. It must be elevated over 14 meters high to have a **rail over road** crossing over Webbs Road. Remain elevated for 500 meters then a **rail over rail** crossing over the Dubbo -Cobar rail line plus another 800 meters for a **rail over road** crossing over the Mitchell Highway. Finally, another 1 km to cross over the Macquarie River.

The 2 right angle bends and the requirement for the train to climb 14 meters high to get over the roads and the other rail line, destroys the straight-line theory, and the ability to maintain any sort of speed. The "justification" for this change was that the flood issues on the **Western** side of Narromine was much greater than on the **Eastern** side, This is the exact opposite to the documented findings of the extensive survey carried out in the original 2010 study, which dismissed the **Eastern** option as not viable.

In January 2021 ARTC announced that they were now going to build a loop on the **Western** side of Narromine to join the Parkes-Narromine-Cobar line. This loop is the same as the original 2010 concept alignment to pass Narromine. One could reasonably expect ARTC to abandon the problem riddled and hugely expensive **Eastern** option and go back to the original concept and use this **Western** alignment. However, ARTC has decided to continue to go **East** and build both alignments, **WHY???**

The problems with the **East** option have forced ARTC to bring this line off the Parkes-Narromine line further south than their study area identified. Quite a few kilometres of the now N2N route are outside the study area that the EIS actually covers. The distance and therefore the time of travel on the now proposed route is longer than that stated in the EIS.

The scoping data used to justify changing from going **West** of Narromine to **East** of Narromine is easily found to be incorrect. The Hydrology report on the flood issues at Narromine, established that all flooding originates from the **East** and contradicts the EIS report that there are fewer flooding issues East of Narromine than West of Narromine.

ARTC states, "Geotech samples were taken every 100 meters". That means over 3000 samples would have had to have been taken along the 300 km N2N, route, although no data is provided to support this. The EIS states that the surveys were taken from public roads????

ARTC stated that 4000 meters of bridging will be required. Documents show that that amount of bridging is required for just one bridge, and there are still 3 other major crossings plus numerous other smaller crossings required. A figure of 1 hundred million dollars is cited for a length of new track. Their documents show that a contract has been awarded for 6 hundred million dollars for the same bit of track. *(Within 4 days of this, and other inconsistencies being pointed out at our CCC meeting, the budget was quickly increased by 5 billion dollars)*

At a CCC meeting ARTC presented us with a Power Point display of a large viaduct structure that they were going to build to cross over the problem area associated with going East of Narromine. When I asked how much this structure would cost, I received no definitive answer and the presentation quickly moved on. At his home visit, a property owner who owns the long narrow property between the Cobar rail line and Mitchel Highway was promised that a viaduct would traverse his property. The EIS has disclosed that, except for the Mitchell Highway to the Macquarie River, the elevated rail line will be the enormous 14-meter-high earthen embankment through his property.

The cost of the ARTC project has already been increased by 50%. The line will not be "future proofed." as they said. There are not going to be any vertically separated rail crossings and no viaduct. One would have to be very naive to believe that the costs are not going to escalate a great deal more. This must severely impact on the financial viability of the project.

It has been announced that NSW Govt. is going to build a large rail maintenance depot at Dubbo. Why wouldn't Inland Rail want to access this facility?

This plethora of false and manipulating information goes on and on and are far too numerous to list.

Like most mechanics, as an ARTC Plant mechanic I could be held Legally and Financially responsible for the consequences of any incidence that any of the machinery I was responsible for, caused, or was involved in. Especially if it was established that I failed to "carry out my duty of care" or didn't "maintain the machine in a safe and proper working condition".

The ARTC people that are involved in this erroneous document don't have the same liability. They have included a caveat in their documents, excluding them from all responsibility or liability for any errors or mis information they have included in their reports. It is inconceivable that a Government authority can submit an official report and have absolutely no responsibility whatsoever as to its accuracy or authenticity.

The CCC was in my opinion a complete waste of time. It was just a medium for ARTC to promote their own agenda. There was no "consultation". There was no medium for the CCC members to communicate with the community. The community was originally barred from attending the meetings. There was no provision for the community to ask any questions unless they posted the question days before the meeting. Absolutely nothing the CCC members suggested or proposed, was ever considered or implemented. Questions concerning the route selection were shut down after the 1st few meetings as ARTC considered them to be historical and they had now moved on to the next phase.

A better system would be for the meetings to be advertised and held in a large suitable premise with ample time allotted for ARTC members to answer questions from the affected community, and if appropriate, justify their decisions.

Logical thinking would suggest that ARTC's N2N Project should be suspended until the results of both the NSW and Federal Government inquiries are tabled.

A LOGICAL & CHEAPER ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FOR INLAND RAIL N2N

Narromine is in a north westerly direction from Parkes, whereas Narrabri is in a north easterly direction from Parkes.

A straight line drawn from Narrabri - Parkes – Forbes -West Wyalong, will pass just west of Dubbo and join the Parkes - Narromine rail line near Tomingley. There is an operational line from Dubbo to Coonamble that basically runs parallel to the current proposed N2N route.

The Newell Highway is a 50 km straight road from Tomingley to Dubbo with a large corridor on either side of it, (approx. 100-200 mts) and passes through several State forest areas.

The option would be to use this corridor and have a bypass around the west of Dubbo, using the airport, and industrial areas. Then connect onto the existing Coonamble line near the Troy – Brocklehurst area. Finally continue onto Narrabri via Coonamble and the Pilliga National Park.

This option would require about 40 km. of new track from Tomingley to about. 15 km. south of Dubbo, then about 20 - 30 km. of new track for the Dubbo bypass. That is 60 -70 Km of new track that would progress the inland rail line nearly 200 Km further along its route to Narrabri. Then 100 km of new track from Coonamble to Narrabri. The large broad-acre wheat farmers around Coonamble want the Inland Rail in their area.

This line would affect a minimal number of property owners and save over 100km of new track. It would have to be hundreds of millions of dollars cheaper than the present N2N route.

The distance of this alternate route from Tomingley- Newell Hwy-Dubbo-Coonamble - Pilliga National Park -Narrabri, is 357 km (info from S.I.X. mapping tool, the same mapping system that ARTC use to measure distances)

The N2N route from Tomingley to Narrabri is 356 km.

This alternative route is about the same distance as the present N2N route. It would avoid all the flood problems associated with the proposed N2N route at Narromine and Curban. It would avoid having to negotiate the foothills of the Warrumbungle Ranges and reduce the requirement of going through a lot of properties. It would also reduce the number of inclines, curves, bridges and culverts. Trains would be able to maintain their high speed over a greater distance.

ARTC has disclosed in a CCC meeting that 100 km of the 160 km. Coonamble line has been upgraded to the same speed and axle weight specifications as Inland Rail's tracks.

ARTC documents state that going through Dubbo adds 38 km on to the trip.

Tomingley-Narromine-Dubbo forms a right-angle triangle with Narromine at the right angle. All ARTC alternate routes via Dubbo start off from Narromine, and do not use the shorter hypotenuse, Tomingley straight to Dubbo. That is how they are able to get the longer distance that makes this route unacceptable for someone.

ARTC stated at a CCC meeting this route was never in their study area and therefore never considered. As they had no problem changing the study area, when they suddenly decided to go East around Narromine, why wouldn't they change it to include this option, if they truly believe that a straight line between 2 points is the shortest and quickest???

Regards



Alan Channell