

**Submission  
No 36**

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

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**Date Received:** 9 February 2021

SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

My name is Robert Webb and I would like to tell you some of my thoughts regarding the Inland Rail project.

I would also like to give you a brief description of ourselves.

Our family first purchased land in the Webb Siding area in 1874. My great grandfather was one of a pioneering generation of men in the Narromine district.

I am the fourth generation of our family to continue farming in the Webb Siding area. Our property is presently comprised of 130 hectares, four kilometres east of Narromine on the Webb Siding Road. While Clearview is a small holding in the scale of Narromine farms, it is a very diverse property. It produces a range of crops including wheat oats& barley. We also produce lucerne hay, fat lambs, wool and Premier Digit seed.

The first 55 years of my life was spent living at a property just south of our present address called Dappo. This property had been managed by my father until his death. I then took over management at the age of 25.

In the early 1980s we experienced an horrific drought which made me realise that the continuous high stocking rate that we had practised would simply not be able to be sustained. We were forced to destock into a very depressed market which created a deal of economic hardship. Fortunately, my wife was able to continue with her teaching which allowed for some degree of financial security to be achieved.

The difficult climatic conditions during that drought provided me with an opportunity to rethink our long-term management. We planted thousands of trees in corridors in and around our property. We also set about planting 202 hectares of Old Man Saltbush. This is a hardy perennial edible shrub which provides a buffer against the wind erosion that we had experienced during the 1982 to 83 drought.

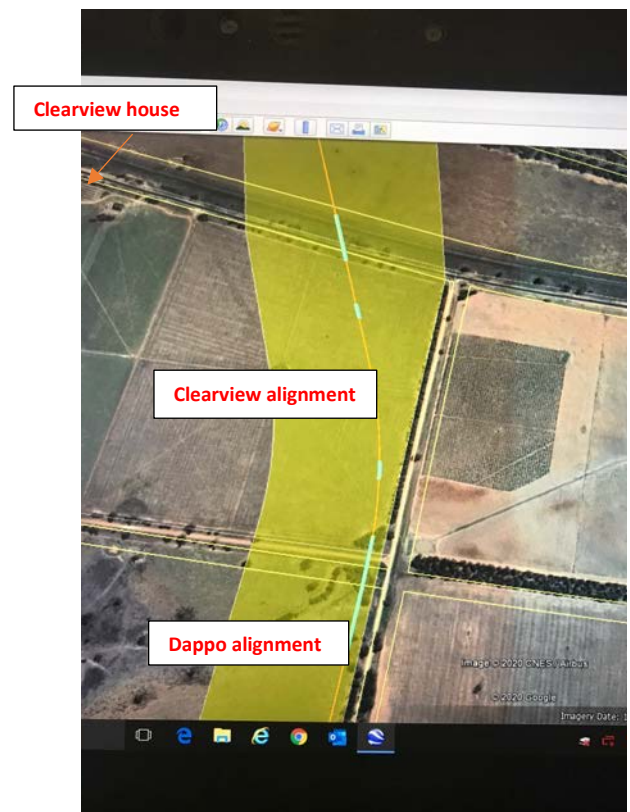
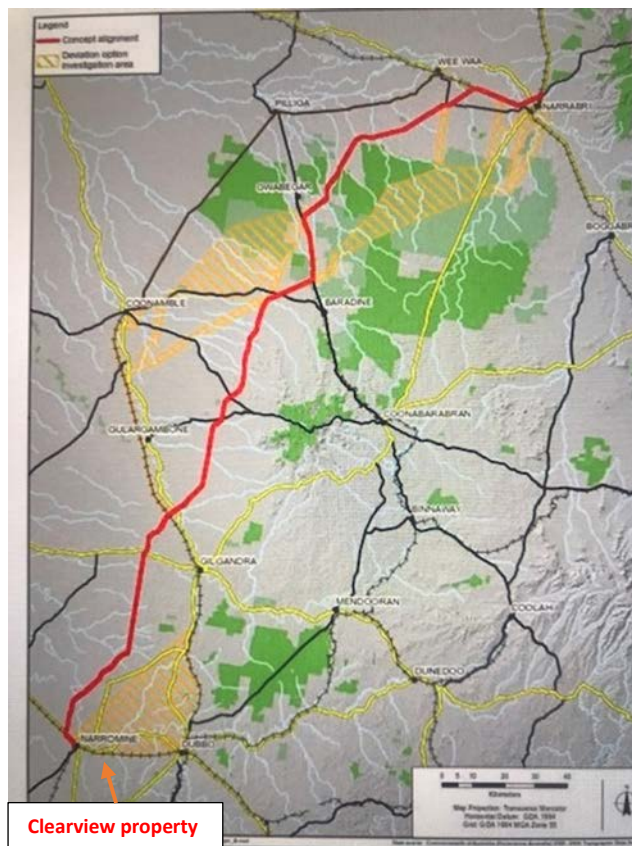
We also set about a rehabilitation program in the 20 ha of Backwater Cowal on the Dappo property. This project has been included in the Narromine Shire website if you are at all interested in furthering your understanding of it.

The projects mentioned have made a profound improvement to the variety of wildlife and plant life in this area.

We were recognised for our efforts by virtue of winning the very first Land Wise Farmer of the year award. We were further recognised with a green riverbanks award. Might I say that the vast majority of work and capital for these works came out of our own resources.

Dappo property was sold to Robert & Chris Samuels in 2015. We have been pleased to welcome them as neighbours.

Inland rail had been talked about for many years in the Western alignment of Narromine. The Eastern alignment had been discarded by Inland Rail as too wet and prone to flooding. In fact, the section of proposed rail corridor through Clearview, Dappo and southward to Narwonnah Siding had not even been included in the first mapping of potential routes for the eastern alignment.



Narromine property owners to the west of our town had a long period of negotiation with Inland Rail and the western route was considered to be the best option.

You can understand our dismay when in December 2017 we received correspondence from Inland Rail stating that our property, along with several others, had been included in a brand new eastern alignment proposal. We were visited by some of the Inland Rail team and given a brief outline of their intentions.

We were further dismayed when we were shown their first plan which had the rail only 50 m to the west of our home.

Their second alignment ran only 200 m to the east of our home.

The third alignment has been drawn running parallel to the Wallaby Road until it reaches Clearview's southern boundary, after which it sweeps in a curve severing our best farming paddock into several ugly and inefficient portions of land.

From the start of our negotiations we have gone to great trouble explaining the history of flooding events of this area.

By far the worst occurred in February 1955 when our family was forced out of the Dappo homestead onto the roof of the woolshed.

These photos have been shown to inland rail and we have also gone to great lengths describing the prolonged saturation events that occur with discharge of runoff water from the Harvey Ranges allowing continual flooding of the Wallaby Road and adjacent areas for months at a stretch. It should be noted that the flood depth at the junction of Dappo and Wallaby Rd rose to 2.4 metres in the 1955 flood.



Webb Family on woolshed roof 1955 flood



Webb family rescued by neighbours

Indeed, the Wallaby Road has been closed for months at a stretch during the 2016 and 2020 years. That alone should serve as a warning bell to the Inland Rail team.

*The image below shows typical storm water run off at the junction of Dappo and Wallaby Roads*



The early design of the Inland Rail through Dappo, Clearview and neighbouring property to the north of existing rail was clearly shown to be bridged. We felt that a complete section of bridging would at least allow for a repeat of a 1955 flood to be accommodated without serious ramifications for flooding upstream and also into Narromine Township.

It would appear that the early promised bridging has now been largely cast aside in favour of earth embankments. The earth embankment will range in height from 4.2 metres on Clearview southern boundary to 7 metres as it reaches the WEBB siding Road.

The country to the north of existing Rail is also planned to have an earth embankment ranging in height from 7.5 metres to 8 metres high. These two earth embankments will not be overtopped even in a 1955 flooding event.

The alarming aspects of this change to their planning will be an enormous risk of increased flooding to residents in and around the Webb siding outflow area of the Macquarie River.

It will further add to potential flooding in Narromine township. We have raised these concerns with both Inland Rail and Narromine Shire.

We feel some degree of optimism that our Shire is listening to our concerns. Unfortunately we do not have any confidence that Inland Rail will take any of our concerns seriously enough to reconsider the more suitable Western alignment.

We have also pointed out that the closure of Dappo Road at the T intersection with Wallaby Road will greatly inconvenience our movement of stock and plant.

Their plans to put a rail through our only established shade trees means that 30 years of perseverance will be lost. We will have no well-established trees to give our stock shade in the heat of summer. We will also lose our ability to water stock on the eastern side of their proposed rail corridor.



These beautiful shade trees will be destroyed in the construction of Inland Rail. Please note that where I am standing, flood water in 1955 reached 2.4 metres in depth.



We have also raised concerns about noise and loss of amenity to our present homestead. These have not been reconciled at this stage.

We have to state that we are most unhappy with our experience of Inland rail and its complete disregard of our concerns.

Inland Rail insist that land acquisition agreements will be issued as early as March this year. It is astounding to think that they are prepared to bulldoze their corridor through greenfield property while so many concerns have not been addressed in their EIS. We feel that there needs to be a complete change to compensation paid to greenfield property owners. It is simply unfair to offer a one off payment based on land valuations as this fails to recognise a whole raft of disadvantages to management, such as access, loss of structures such as fencing, watering points, etc.

A much fairer compensation arrangement would consist of a one off payment covering the loss of land and assets, followed by annual payments over a 100 year period to help maintain the viability of those people disadvantaged by the building of this rail corridor.

### **Acronyms**

ARTC have a favoured tactic which involves the rapid change of staffing positions. We believe that this is to prevent any long term building of trust. They also use an enormous amount of lengthy terms such as 'multi criteria analysis' and 'community consultative committee' to name a couple. These are invariably turned into acronyms which means that all their literature is peppered with acronyms. This makes it very difficult for people such as ourselves to reach a proper understanding of their intentions.

### **Pork Barrelling**

A further unfair tactic used by ARTC is to provide funding for cultural centres, sporting organisations, etc. in the various townships along the route. This is simply pork barrelling to try to curry favour with the towns people. Greenfield land owners will see little, if any benefit from this spending.

### **Budgetary Blowouts**

Inland Rail is simply a bottomless pit when it comes to its budgetary requirements.

Its starting price of ten billion rapidly needed an additional five billion. Make no mistake, this venture will more than likely waste fifty billion or more.

We have great doubts as to whether Inland Rail is a viable project in its present form .

We are unable to understand why they have chosen the eastern alignment as it will add an enormous amount of additional building costs to the project.

We remain suspicious that there has been political interference in the route selection process.  
We urge you to use whatever power you have to thoroughly probe into the processes that have been used to change the route from west to east

Robert and Rosemary Webb