



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

**Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Riverina**

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Cr Doug Batten
Mayor of Gilgandra Shire Council
PO Box 23
GILGANDRA NSW 2827

07 NOV 2019

Gilgandra Shire Council

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Dear Mayor 

Thank you for your letter of 21 August 2019 on behalf of concerned landholders, supporting their request for an independent inquiry of the Inland Rail route selection process, in particular the Narromine and Narrabri (N2N) section. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Firstly I would like to thank you for your support of Inland Rail, and congratulate the Gilgandra Shire Council on the recent announcement of the Gilgandra Industrial Precinct. It is the work of local governments like Gilgandra Shire Council that will ensure the success of Inland Rail and the longevity and prosperity of our regions.

The Australian Government is confident that the N2N study corridor has been well considered. Local preferences as well as other factors like hydrology and constructability have, and continue to be, measured and understood. On this basis, I do not endorse a further review of the study corridor. There have been corridor studies or analyses in 2006, 2010, 2015 and 2016-17, and I see no reason to do a further review.

You also asked in your letter that we seek to give certainty to landowners while further narrowing the N2N corridor. I want to assure you that the Australian Government is listening. I am aware that some farmers and communities along the Inland Rail alignment have raised concerns about a lack of transparency and engagement during the route corridor selection process.

While the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) is trying to finalise the corridor as soon as possible, they are taking the time to get the narrowing process right, and using local knowledge to inform the alignment and design solutions. ARTC is currently engaging with landholders and the community about this process, which will hopefully provide more certainty.

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Once the alignment within the study corridor is settled, a more detailed design and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared by ARTC. The EIS process is rigorous and robust, governed by State and Commonwealth environmental and planning laws. This process also requires thorough and transparent engagement with landholders and the community at a level of detail they rightly expect, including drawing on local knowledge and insight. At my request ARTC has increased its level of community engagement, making further information and independent technical experts accessible to the community.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development and ARTC are continuing to work with community and industry to maximise benefits and opportunities from Inland Rail and minimise harm wherever possible.

Thank you again for your correspondence and your ongoing support of Inland Rail.

Yours sincerely



Michael McCormack