



Gilgandra Shire Council

03 SEP 2018

The Hon Michael McCormack MP Document #

Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport  
Leader of The Nationals  
Federal Member for Riverina

Ref: MC18-004745

24 AUG 2018

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

  
Dear Mayor

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2018 regarding Gilgandra Shire landholders impacted by Inland Rail. It was also good to meet with you on 22 June 2018 to discuss Gilgandra Shire Council's plans to maximise the local benefits of Inland Rail and I look forward to a future community meeting in the region. I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to those issues outlined in your correspondence.

First, I wish to congratulate Gilgandra Shire Council on its successful application under the Building Better Regions Fund round two for a strategic plan to capitalise on opportunities offered by Inland Rail. The Australian Government is committed to supporting regions to maximise the benefits of Inland Rail, and your Council's proactive approach will be advantageous in realising such benefits in the Gilgandra area.

The selected Narromine to Narrabri study corridor announced on 30 November 2017 has been informed by many years of research and analysis. The Government is confident that it delivers the best outcome for the overall Inland Rail project, Australian taxpayers and the Australian economy.

The Inland Rail project is required to meet Australia's growing domestic freight task. It will only achieve this by meeting the service required by the industry to move its freight from road to rail, namely:

- less than 24 hour transit time between Melbourne and Brisbane
- reliability the same as road (98%)
- competitive pricing
- freight that is available when the market wants it

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The Hon Michael McCormack MP

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The selected Narromine to Narrabri study area was developed following extensive studies undertaken by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) and the Government over the past decade. Specifically, the 2010 Inland Rail study concluded that the greenfield corridor between Narromine and Narrabri provided the best opportunity to reduce the length of the Inland Rail project (a reduction of approximately 100 km) and deliver a less than 24 hour transit time. The 2015 Inland Rail Implementation Group Report endorsed the 2010 alignment.

I appreciate that there are many views on the Inland Rail alignment and this is reflected along the 1,700km length of the corridor. I acknowledge that it is not going to meet everyone's preference; however, I am confident the current Inland Rail route offers the best solution to realise the significant national and regional benefits of Inland Rail, while also seeking to minimise negative impacts to those affected.

There are still opportunities for the community to influence where the 40-60 metre alignment will be located within the study area.

ARTC will be progressing the Narromine to Narrabri study corridor through the environmental impact assessment process. This is an iterative process to ensure an outcome is achieved which best meets the needs of the railway, landholders and broader communities. Environmental and socio-economic factors, including impacts on nearby landholders, will be considered and informed by extensive consultation with landholders. ARTC will hold numerous individual meetings with landholders to resolve issues including water access and flow, stock and machinery movements and similar matters.

The community consultative committees that ARTC is establishing for the project will complement these meetings. Subject matter experts will be made available through the community consultative committees to share information with the committee, to answer questions and to discuss topics of interest. I encourage you to work to help ARTC and local landholders and communities identify the optimal rail corridor.

I appreciate you expressing the Council's concerns about the placement of the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities' regional office in Dubbo. The Department's regional liaison officers cover the area from Stockinbingal to Narrabri. Consequently, Dubbo was selected because it provides good access to the regions supported by these officers.

I understand that the Dubbo team recently met with Gilgandra Shire Council staff to discuss potential opportunities for the region. I appreciate your Council's ongoing commitment to Inland Rail and to identifying opportunities for your region to make the most of this once-in-a-generation infrastructure investment. The officers of the Dubbo team will continue to engage with your Council throughout the delivery of Inland Rail.

The Government is implementing initiatives to assist regions to identify, realise and maximise the regional benefits of Inland Rail. This includes the development of an 'Are You Ready for Inland Rail' strategic planning tool by the Regional Australia Institute. This tool will help regions better understand their regional economic strengths and potential areas of growth based on new opportunities brought by Inland Rail.

Lastly, I understand that the uncertainty and ongoing refinement process is causing a level of frustration among the community. I appreciate your suggestion of a letter to all affected

landholders explaining and justifying the selection, and outlining a clear and concise timeframe to give landholders more clarity. The Department will raise this matter with ARTC, along with the consultation concerns that you raised.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention and I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael McCormack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Michael McCormack

cc: The Hon Mark Coulton MP, Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment