

# MEETING MINUTES

## Narrabri to North Star Inland Rail (Phase 2)

### Community Reference Group

#### DATE / TIME

21 June 2023  
4.10 pm

#### LOCATION

Moree Town and Country Club, Frome Street, Moree

#### FACILITATOR

Michael Silver OAM

#### MINUTE TAKER

Michael Silver OAM

#### DISTRIBUTION

N2NS (Phase 2) CRG

#### ATTENDEES

- ▶ Michael Silver (Independent Chair)
- ▶ Rodney Schoupp (Community Member)
- ▶ Steve McIntosh (Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council)
- ▶ Alexander Munro (Community Member)
- ▶ Terry Haynes (Moree Gun Club)
- ▶ Michael Murphy (Community Member)
- ▶ Meryl Dillon (Community Member)
- ▶ Christopher Hartin (Moree Floodplain Committee)
- ▶ Sonia Rowe (Community Member)
- ▶ Wayne Window (ARTC)
- ▶ Naomi Tonscheck (ARTC)
- ▶ Isabella Hall (ARTC)
- ▶ Martin Singleton (ARTC) [video link]
- ▶ Haidar Etemadi (ARTC) [video link]
- ▶ Marcela Suarez (ARTC) [video link]
- ▶ Steven Le (ARTC) [video link]

#### APOLOGIES

- ▶ Karen Craigie (Community Member)
- ▶ Mark Connolly (Moree Plains Shire Council)

#### OBSERVERS

- ▶ Cr Mark Johnson (Mayor, Moree Plains Shire Council)
- ▶ Rebecca English (Moree Plains Shire Council)
- ▶ Danika Green (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development)
- ▶ John Zannes (Transport for NSW)
- ▶ Laura Colley (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development)
- ▶ Rachael Latimer (ARTC)
- ▶ Alexander Scott (NSW Department of Planning and Environment) [video link]
- ▶ Belinda Scott (NSW Department of Planning and Environment) [video link]
- ▶ Michael Lahoud (NSW Department of Planning and Environment) [video link]
- ▶ Jacqui Neil (ARTC) [video link]

## Discussions

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
1. <b>Welcome</b>	The Chair welcomed all members to the inaugural meeting of the Narrabri to North Star (Phase 2) Community Reference Group (N2NS CRG). Mr Silver also acknowledged the presence of the Mayor of Moree Plains Shire Council, Councillor Mark Johnson, representatives from the NSW government agencies, the representative of the Commonwealth Government agency, representatives from Moree Plains Shire Council and the ARTC staff.

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	The Chair then invited all CRG members, ARTC staff and observers to introduce themselves.
2. <b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	The Chair invited Mr Steve McIntosh of Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council to deliver the Acknowledgement of Country. Mr McIntosh acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting is being held and recognised their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture, paying respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.
3. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair outlined the requirement for community members to declare any interest (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) relative to their membership of the N2NS CRG. Mr Silver advised he will be forwarding declaration forms to members for execution following the meeting.</li> <li>• In the interim, the Chair requested members to verbally declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests. No declarations were advised by Committee members.</li> <li>• Michael Silver – Pecuniary interest – expenses of Independent Chair borne by ARTC.</li> </ul>
4. <b>Community Reference Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair outlined the background to the formation of the Community Reference Group (CRG) and its role in providing a mechanism for the flow of information (both ways) regarding the project, between the proponent and the community. Mr Silver advised that the CRG provides a framework for engagement ensuring the community is kept informed of the status of the project, consulted on the development of the project, and can provide feedback on issues as they may arise.</li> <li>• The Chair highlighted to community members the significance of their role to advocate for community members and raise issues of concern as they occur. He outlined the various processes within the operation of the CRG that will support members in ensuring that information on the project or responses to issues is made available for dissemination to the community.</li> </ul>
5. <b>Program Overview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair invited Wayne Window to provide a broad overview of the Inland Rail Project. Mr Window noted that the project is designed to enhance the national freight and supply chain capability. Connecting Melbourne and Brisbane via regional Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, the 1,600km rail project will complete our national freight network. The project will also provide for east/west connection at Parkes.</li> </ul>
6. <b>CRG Charter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair provided an overview of the CRG Charter noting that it is broadly based on the Guidelines issued by the NSW Department of Planning (DPE) for Community Consultative Committees. Mr Silver highlighted the key objectives outlined in the Charter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establishing good working relationships between the Proponent, stakeholders, and council.</li> <li>▪ Keeping the community informed about the Project, seeking community views, and responding to matters raised by the community.</li> <li>▪ Allowing the community to provide feedback on the development and implementation of the project.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Chair detailed the role and responsibilities of the Committee members and, also, the responsibilities of the Proponent. Mr Silver highlighted the Code of Conduct and the responsibility of all CRG members to abide by its requirements.</li> <li>• The Chair outline recent amendments to the Charter previously distributed to members. He advised that the amendments did not change the scope or direction of the Charter but rather clarified the status of GRG meetings and requirements in respect of attendance by non-members. Mr Silver highlighted</li> </ul>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p>that CRG meetings are not public meetings and that non-members may only attend with the endorsement of the committee and Chair.</p>
<p>7. Inland Rail Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Naomi Tonscheck provided a summary of the recent Independent Review of the Inland Rail Program by Dr Kerry Schott AO. Ms Tonscheck advised that the Australian Government has adopted the 19 recommendations contained in Dr Schott's report. Consequently, there is now a focus on strengthening governance, reviewing risk management processes, assessing costs through appointment of an independent cost estimator with expenditure subject to final government approval, maximising rural and regional opportunities and determining the intermodal terminal arrangements in Melbourne and Brisbane.</li> </ul>
<p>8. Proponent's Report - N2NS (Phase 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steve Le outlined the extent of the N2NS (Phase 2) project, noting it involves a 13 kilometres brownfield upgrade with a 2 kilometres bypass of the Camurra hairpin. It will also involve the replacement of two bridges at the Gwydir and Mehi Rivers.</li> <li>The Chair requested background on why this section of the N2NS project was isolated from the balance of the works. Wayne Window advised that it was pulled out of the overall project in 2017 due to issues associated with hydrology and flooding. At the time Moree Plains Shire Council was working through the upgrade of its flood model and it was considered appropriate to pause this section of the project to allow Council's flooding modelling work to be completed. This would allow Council's flood modelling data to be integrated with its brownfields upgrade project.</li> <li>Mr Le provided an update on the planning and determination process. He advised that the Response to Submission (RTS) to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) exhibited in 2022 and Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) are currently being prepared. Meryl Dillon noted the process and sought confirmation that no short-cuts would be considered, and everything would be in place for the development to proceed. Mr Le confirmed all processes will be followed.</li> <li>Mr Le spoke to the project design, providing a verbal overview of the various upgrade works and treatments along the 15 kilometres line. He noted that overall, the rail line embankment would be 0.5 metres higher than the current embankment. A video of a 'fly-through' of Phase 2 can be viewed at: <a href="https://inlandrail.artc.com.au/where-we-go/projects/narrabri-to-north-star/works-and-planning/phase-2/">https://inlandrail.artc.com.au/where-we-go/projects/narrabri-to-north-star/works-and-planning/phase-2/</a></li> <li>The Chair questioned whether the embankment associated with the Camurra hairpin is to remain post development. Mr Window responded that it is intended that the bank will be retained as it does assist with flood mitigation. Michael Murphy noted there are two irrigation channels running under this embankment – Mr Window acknowledged this is a consideration and options are being evaluated to manage these penetrations. Treatments such as floodgates will be considered.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> <i>That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide a detailed presentation on the hydrology and proposed flood management requirements associated with retention of the Camurra hairpin embankment.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Window stepped the approvals process as detailed in Slide 20. He drew the Committee's attention to the requirement for Australian Government approval in respect of 'controlled actions', being those actions that the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water decides to have, will have or are likely to have a significant impact on one or more protected matters and therefore require assessment and approval under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). Mr Window highlighted impacts on River Red Gum and Mitchell Grasslands that will fall under the requirements of the EPBC Act.</li> </ul>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p><b>ACTION:</b> <i>That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide an overview of the requirements of the EPBC Act and the areas of natural environment within the N2NS (Phase 2) project that are likely to be subject to 'controlled action' requirements under the Act.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Singleton provided an analysis of the submissions received during the exhibition of the EIS. He noted that three quarters of the 30 submissions were received from those in the immediate are of the project. Regarding public and organisation submissions, 63% were neutral, 26% supported the project, whilst 11% raised objections; wide range of issues were raised in these submissions, however the over-riding concerns related to noise/vibration and hydrology/flooding. In respect of comments from public authorities, Mr Singleton advised that noise/vibration and hydrology/flooding were the main considerations along with biodiversity and design matters.</li> <li>• Mr Singleton highlighted requirements outlined in the DPE request for a Preferred Infrastructure Report with the focus being on provision of further information on hydrology and flooding as well as noise.</li> <li>• In terms of the current status of the project, Mr Singleton advised that it is at the Tender Design stage. This process will advance the design beyond the Reference Design and will inform the RTS and the PIR. He outlined the potential design requirements to be considered in development of the Tender Design. Mr Window added that issues raised by government agencies and the design team post the Reference Design will be addressed.</li> <li>• Isabella Hall noted that emergency access capability is being assessed under the Steel Bridge and the Newell Highway Bridge on the southern side of the Mehi River.</li> <li>• Meryl Dillon questioned what the implications would be for access to the Steel Bridge Camp Aboriginal heritage site from the Newell Highway. Further, she asked what ARTC had learnt from other studies, such as the By-Pass study and other government agency studies. Mr Window responded that a literature review of previous studies had been undertaken in preparing the EIS. This literature review combined with site analysis and impact assessment permitted judgement on mitigation measures. Ms Hall advised that Inland Rail would work with First Nations' people regarding the Steel Bridge Camp.</li> <li>• Chris Hartin request advice as to where a listing of impacts from the project can be found. Mr Window advised that the EIS contains an Executive Summary and a Summary of Findings that deals with impact and mitigation measures. Mr Hartin asked whether this will be updated because of the submissions received. In response, Mr Window advised that the PIR would update project impacts and mitigation measures with clarity regarding any changes. He also advised that discussions would occur with those that are likely to be directly impacted.</li> <li>• Isabella Hall provided a review of the key issues raised in community and stakeholder feedback. She noted that the level of flood behaviour change that Inland Rail can effect is tightly controlled through Conditions of Approval that are provided if a project is approved by the Department of Planning. For example, on other projects the Department has required that the level of change is no more than 10mm on residential blocks. Ms Hall also noted that noise issues were a prime consideration in the Moree urban area. She indicated that it was unfortunate that the existing bridges, with a rich heritage, must be demolished as they are unable to support the weight of the trains. Mr Murphy questioned whether the bridges can be relocated and reused. Ms Hall indicated that it is proposed to memorialise the bridges.</li> <li>• Ms Hall advised that level crossings are currently being assessed to ensure compliance with Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model. She also noted that the project will require a small area of land acquisition and temporary occupation of land during the construction phase.</li> </ul>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Window outlined the noise management principles associated with the project noting that all noise and vibration impacts associated with the construction and operation of Inland Rail are evaluated as part of the project approval. He noted that moderate noise is in the 60db – 70db range, whilst the maximum noise criteria at night is 60db. The maximum train noise is set at 80db, with most trains operating at between 80db and 95db. Mr Window added that double stacking only adds about 0.3db to that of a single stack train. Mr Murphy question how train noise standards are established – are they based on a straight track in lieu of curves? What is the change of noise level on curves? There are several curves around Moree. Mr Window acknowledged there would need to be modelling of these potential noise levels in the vicinity of Moree.</li> <li>• Mr Window provided an in-depth analysis of the noise issue. He noted that there are two areas of noise associated with the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Construction Noise</li> <li>▪ Operational Noise</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mr Window highlighted for construction work the standard work hours set out in the Environmental Protection Authorities Interim Construction Noise Guidelines. He indicated that Inland Rail is seeking a variation to the standard on the following basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 6.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Sunday with respite every second weekend commencing at 1.00pm on Saturday.</li> <li>▪ Limit to standard hours near to sensitive receptors.</li> <li>▪ More restrictive times for very noisy works.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mr Murphy expressed concern at the impact of construction haulage routes, particularly if work is to be undertaken on a seven day per week basis. He noted haulage for the first stage of the N2NS project resulted in 52 gravel road trains passing through Pallamallawa each day. This is unacceptable – alternative routes need to be considered to reduce the impact on the community.</li> <li>• Ms Dillon noted the impact of large haulage vehicles on the road network. Rebecca English advised that this is addressed in the Traffic Management Plan for the project with an assessment of the road condition prior to commencement and the restoration of the road post development. Mr Hartin commented that given the impact on the roads and the length of construction period, there needs to be intervention during the construction phase not just following completion.</li> <li>• Mr Window advised that operational noise must comply the Rail Infrastructure Noise Guideline (RING). He indicated that where operational noise and vibration modelling predicts exceedances of the criteria mitigating measures will be considered. These measures include noise walls, property treatments and acoustic barriers. Mitigating measures will be discussed with affected property owners.</li> <li>• Mr Window discussed the potential for 12 properties in the Morton/Oak Street area to exceed the RING criteria for operational noise by 2040. He indicated further noise modelling will occur with the outcomes and proposed mitigation measures, following consultation with property owners to be included in the PIR.</li> <li>• Mr Murphy commented that the noise impact can be affected by climatic conditions, such as wind and inversions, which may result in impacts on areas remote from the rail line. Mr Window indicated that the DPE will assess the modelling process and evaluate the mitigation options proposed. He suggested that mitigation options are likely to be presented by Inland Rail to residents during September 2023. Considerable consultation will occur with residents to carefully consider and evaluate all options. Following this process, it is proposed to report in the PIR on the best options to achieve an acceptable outcome. In response to the Chair, Ms Hall advised that it is Inland Rail policy</li> </ul>

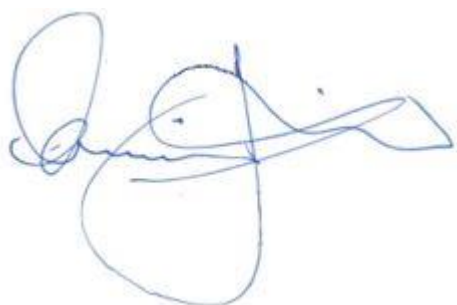
NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p>not to acquire property based on noise impacts. Mr Hartin questioned whether the noise issue will impact property values. Ms Hall responded that property values are not a consideration of the noise mitigation process. Ms Dillon suggested that Council would not favour a reduction in housing stock in the Moree urban area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Tonscheck advised the Committee that operational noise consultation is currently being undertaken in respect of the first stage of the Narrabri to North Star Inland Rail project. This should not be confused with operational noise consultation for Phase 2 which is yet to commence</li> </ul>
<b>9. Other Agenda Items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>
<b>10. General Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul> <p>Meeting closed at 6.10 pm. The Chair thanked all for their attendance and advised that the next meeting of the N2NS CRG will be scheduled for September 2023 at a date to be confirmed.</p>

## Actions

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
1	That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide a detailed presentation on the hydrology and proposed flood management requirements associated with retention of the Camurra hairpin embankment.		31/12/2023
2	That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide an overview of the requirements of the EPBC Act and the areas of natural environment within the N2NS (Phase 2) project that are likely to be subject to 'controlled action' requirements under the Act.		01/10/2023

## Next Meeting

Meeting minutes approved.



Michael J. Silver OAM  
Independent Chair

7 July 2023