The ARTC Inland Rail team is sharing plans for the next stage of the Illabo to Stockinbingal project. Illabo to Stockinbingal (I2S) in southern NSW is one of 13 projects that complete Inland Rail, Australia’s largest freight rail project.

The I2S project involves building 37 km of new rail track that will provide a direct route between Illabo and Stockinbingal, bypassing the townships of Cootamundra and Bethunga, and the winding and steep section of track known as the Bethungra Spiral.

**CURRENT PROJECT STAGE**

The I2S project is currently in the feasibility stage. In 2010, the project identified a preferred area to investigate further. A concept assessment was undertaken between 2016 and 2017 which established a 2 km wide study area, which was approved by the Australian Government. Since then, we have been taking a wide range of factors into consideration to find the best route, through a Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) process.

The MCA process is recognised as an industry standard and is widely used in Australia and internationally. A range of factors are considered in an MCA, including technical viability, environmental impacts, safety, community and property impacts, operational approach, approvals, stakeholder engagement, constructability and schedule.

Following MCA investigations and landowner consultation, the initial 2 km wide study area has recently been reduced to a 250 m wide focused area of investigation (FAI).

ARTC Inland Rail believes that the FAI is the most best route, which parallels existing roads where possible and minimises the impacts on farming land. It also avoids known Aboriginal artefacts, as well as flood-prone areas to the west and rocky areas to the east.

The FAI has minimised the number of level crossings. However, level crossings will be constructed where necessary to allow access for traffic and farming operations. ARTC Inland Rail will construct bridges where topography / rail design means a level crossing isn’t safe or practical.

The 70% feasibility design stage of the I2S section has also been developed. This design stage incorporates many elements, including placement for level crossings, bridges, underpasses and borrow pits.
VISITS WITH LANDOWNERS AND COMMUNITY

From June 2019, ARTC Inland Rail will begin visiting impacted landowners to inform them of the 250 m wide focus area of investigation (FAI) and to discuss elements of the 70% Feasibility Design. These one-on-one meetings will include our technical experts and the community engagement team.

Landowners will be provided with updated property maps, highlighting the location of the FAI and elements of the 70% feasibility design such as the location of level crossings, stock crossings and borrow pits.

We will be holding community drop-in sessions at various locations around the project area during August, to gather feedback from the wider community about the FAI and the 70% feasibility design.

WHEN WILL WORK START BETWEEN ILLABO AND STOCKINBINDAL?

While we are in the second part of our planning and engineering investigations (feasibility stage) for I2S, we still have some way to go before construction starts.

We have been on the ground, consulting the community to capture feedback and to keep all our stakeholders informed and engaged in the process. We are also working on getting the necessary approvals, such as the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

As part of the EIS process, we are continuing with a range of environmental investigations during 2019, including ground water monitoring, cultural heritage surveys, winter bird surveys, and spring flora surveys.

We are also completing a Social Impact Assessment (SIA). The SIA will identify the potential social impacts of the I2S project (both direct and indirect) that may affect people and communities during all stages of the project lifecycle. This work will also look at impact mitigation and opportunities.

Once we have completed the EIS document and the SIA report, they will be advertised locally and be put on public exhibition for a minimum of 30 days – we expect this to occur in mid-2020. The final 40 to 60 m wide rail corridor will be released as part of the EIS.

Community members will be invited to provide EIS feedback to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment during this period, before the project is submitted to the NSW Minister of Planning for approval. Following approval, construction of the I2S section of the rail track is earmarked to start in 2022.
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The first meetings of the I2S Community Consultative Committee (CCC) took place in Cootamundra in February 2019, led by Independent Chair Garry West. The next meeting will be held on 8 August 2019 at Cootamundra.

CCCs complement our other consultation methods, and are a forum for sharing Inland Rail information between the project team and the community, to discuss topics of interest, and to address issues and concerns.

In addition to the Independent Chair, the I2S committee has 15 members, who will provide input and feedback into the Illabo to Stockinbingal project.

Visit inlandrail.artc.com.au/I2S-ccc for meeting minutes, member details and upcoming meeting information.

RECENT CULTURAL HERITAGE DIGS

Local Aboriginal representatives recently joined archaeology experts to conduct a number of cultural heritage excavations within the I2S project area.

The soil excavations – or digs – took place within a number of zones within the 2 km wide rail corridor study area.

The dig team members were looking for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (European) artefacts, with a number of items of interest uncovered.

Archaeological tests are currently underway to assess the items, with results to be shared with Aboriginal stakeholders and the wider community during the coming months.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

We welcome all community members to ask questions and learn more about Inland Rail at our information sessions.

Meet the team and have your say at one of our upcoming community drop-in sessions.

To make sure you are up to date, subscribe to our I2S newsletter via: inlandrail.artc.com.au/register

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<th>STOCKINBINGAL</th>
<th>COOTAMUNDRA</th>
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<td>Thursday 1 August, 9 – 12 noon</td>
<td>Friday 2 August, 9 – 12 noon</td>
<td>Friday 2 August, 4 – 7 pm and Saturday 3 August, 9 – 12 noon</td>
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<td><strong>Where:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Temora Shire Council foyer, 105 Loftus St, Temora NSW 2666</td>
<td>Ellwood Hall, 32 Martin St, Stockinbingal NSW 2725</td>
<td>Meeting Room 1, Cootamundra Library, 61 – 71 Wallendoon St, Cootamundra NSW 2590</td>
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<td>ILLABO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illabo Tennis Clubhouse, Wood Street, Illabo NSW 2590</td>
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COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIPS AND DONATIONS PROGRAM – NOW OPEN!

We’re always looking for new opportunities to make a difference in the regional communities we live and work in.

Through the Inland Rail Community Sponsorships and Donations program, we’re supporting local community groups that are running events and activities which contribute to local and regional prosperity, wellbeing and sustainability.

Your community group might be eligible for funding. Financial requests between $1000 and $4000, from eligible community organisations, will be considered.

The current round is open for applications until 6pm (AEST) on 31 July 2019.

For more information, including eligibility requirements, application and assessment processes, and frequently asked questions, please visit inlandrail.artc.com.au/sponsorships

If you have any questions, please email communitysponsorships@artc.com.au.

ABOUT INLAND RAIL

Inland Rail is a once-in-a-generation project that will enhance supply chains and complete the backbone of the national freight network by providing for a transit time of 24 hours or less for freight trains between Melbourne and Brisbane via regional Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Inland Rail will transform the way we move freight around the country, connect regional Australia to markets more efficiently, drive substantial cost savings for producers and consumers, and deliver significant economic benefits.

Comprising 13 individual projects and spanning more than 1,700 km, Inland Rail is the largest freight rail infrastructure project in Australia and one of the most significant infrastructure projects in the world.

The Australian Government selected the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) to deliver Inland Rail, in partnership with the private sector.

The Australian Government has committed $9.3 billion to the delivery of Inland Rail, with construction having commenced in late 2018. Inland Rail is expected to be fully operational in 2024–25, and one 1,800 m double-stacked train operating on Inland Rail will carry the same volume of freight as 110 B-double trucks.

Better infrastructure and an effective national freight operation are key to delivering efficient supply chains, improving Australia’s global competitiveness and lifting our nation’s wealth and prosperity.