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 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.

ABOUT THE NARRABRI TO NORTH STAR PROJECT

The Narrabri to North Star (N2NS) project is an upgrade of approximately 188 km of track within the existing rail corridor and construction of approximately 1.6 km of new rail track. The works are required to accommodate the operation of future planned 1,800 m double-stacked freight trains.

Our work between Narrabri and North Star will include:

- upgrading the existing rail line, generally within the current rail corridor
- a new section of rail line at Camurra to bypass the existing hairpin curve
- re-establishing and/or expanding drainage works next to the track
- replacing existing culverts and adding new culverts
- significant level crossing works including adding flashing lights and boom gates at key sites
- replacing bridges at the Mehi River, Gwydir River and Croppa Creek
- establishing five crossing loops to allow trains to pass (Bobbiwaa Loop, Waterloo Creek Loop, Tycannah Creek Loop, Cooleearlee Loop and Murgo Loop)
- minor changes to track alignments at Bellata, Gurley and Moree stations
- providing a new road overpass over the existing rail corridor at Moree and replacing the Newell Highway overpass near Bellata.
WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING?
In late 2017, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Narrabri to North Star section was placed on exhibition by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. The Inland Rail team is preparing a Submissions and Preferred Infrastructure Report (SPIR) that addresses the issues raised and outlines changes made to the project in response. The SPIR will help to inform the NSW Minister for Planning and Environment in assessing the project. Commonwealth Government approvals also need to be finalised.

In parallel to EIS approvals, some of the work we have undertaken includes:
- stakeholder engagement regarding planning for the two overpasses
- working with local government to better understand local issues such as social impacts and benefits
- meeting and working with landowners and stakeholders across the alignment
- engagement regarding use and requirements for level crossings and sourcing material
- completing further field studies such as ecology, noise, traffic counts and geotechnical studies
- expressions of interest have been sought for some pre-construction works and the supply of materials.

NEIGHBOURING PROJECTS
The N2NS project connects to the Narromine to Narrabri (N2N) project in the south and the North Star to NSW/QLD Border (NS2B) project in the north. These projects are different in type and timing to N2NS.

NEXT STEPS
Pending approval, the project has been divided into two portions to enable the more complex hydrology of the 15 km floodplain between the Mehi and Gwydir rivers north of Moree to be investigated, while the upgrade of the remaining 174 km progresses on schedule. This will require a new EIS process for the flood plain portion. Completion of detailed design of the 174 km upgrade is expected by mid to late 2019 with tenders being called for a construction contract later in 2019.

Expressions of interest to construct bridges at the Newell Highway north of Bellata and at Moree are expected to be announced in mid–2019 for site works to begin in early 2020.

We are expecting to begin the delivery of sleepers and steel rail to sections of the N2NS corridor. Construction is estimated to begin in 2020 and take two years to complete.

Field investigations and further EIS studies for the floodplain area between the Mehi and Gwydir rivers will be undertaken from late 2019, with approvals for this section sought in 2020.

Over the coming months, our team will be meeting with stakeholders to inform and consult on:
- opportunities for biodiversity offset sites
- noise and vibration studies
- corridor fencing and safety requirements
- social and economic legacy
- delivery of rail, sleepers and other materials and general construction arrangements
- safety within the rail corridor
- flood mitigation
- construction of over-rail bridges.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?
ARTC is committed to working with landowners, communities, state and local governments as a vital part of our planning and consultation work, and we value your input. If you have any questions or comments please let us know.

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*Timeframes are indicative and are subject to change