

Strathbogie

SHIRE COUNCIL

11 November 2022

Strathbogie Shire Council submission to the Independent Review of the delivery of the Inland Rail Program.

1. ARTC governance and management arrangements for the delivery of the Inland Rail Program.
How could ARTC improve its management arrangements and structures to better facilitate the delivery of the Inland Rail Program?

Response: Whilst it is difficult to comment on the entire management structure of ARTC, our experience locally with the Victorian staff (including senior management), has been positive. They have been easily accessible and responsive. Consistently liaising with the same two or three staff members throughout the process has been beneficial to ensuring a direct point of contact to the ARTC. It is unclear if this is the same experience in other areas, however this direct point of contact and senior executive management availability is appreciated.

2. The role of Inland Rail in meeting Australia's growing freight task and providing a Service Offering to meet freight sector needs. *How could Inland Rail and access to intermodal terminals create new opportunities and benefits for your region/industry/community?*

Response: The provision of an Inland Rail Freight Intermodal in central Victoria would be of significant economic benefit to Strathbogie region. By providing an interface for regional products from the Goulburn valley and north-central Victoria, accessing fast rail to the Port of Brisbane would save significant time and cost to producers and transport operators.

In 2019/2020 Strathbogie Shire worked with the owners of the Mangalore Airport and Ernst & Young to deliver a business case under the Inland Rail Interface Improvement Program for the establishment of a freight intermodal at Mangalore Airport. To date we have not been officially informed of the outcome of that submission. A brief synopsis of the business case is provided below.

The establishment of a freight intermodal at Mangalore Airport in central Victoria would allow the efficient transfer of freight to road, rail and air as required.

The provisions of a freight intermodal at this site will allow servicing of freight services to Melbourne particularly the Northern suburbs industrial and freight hubs. It will also provide freight transfer services to Shepparton and the wider Goulburn valley region along with sections of southern New South Wales and North-western Victoria. It is

believed there is sufficient space at the site to allow the construction of a railway siding, branch lines and consideration should also be given to the construction of a modern grain storage and transfer system that would facilitate transfer between road and rail systems.

The proposed intermodal would also allow the transfer of goods to air freight services.

Other advantages of this site include:

- Close proximity to the Goulburn Valley Freeway and Hume Freeway
- Close proximity to the Inland Rail route
- Mangalore Airport Corporation land has approximately 1,000m of rail frontage to the Goulburn Valley rail line.
- There is a planning exclusion zone around the airport which would prevent urban encroachment.
- The site is over 1,000 acres and has the potential to be developed as a transport and industrial hub that could be established alongside the Inland Rail line.
- The generation of local employment opportunities for north-central Victorians.
- Significant reduction in road freight movements across the region which would also result in reduction in greenhouse gas production from road transport.

The development of this site as a freight intermodal would offer enormous benefit to freight transport in north-central Victoria and in particular the Goulburn Valley which is considered to be the “food bowl” of Victoria and alleviate some of the constraints on the metropolitan rail network by diverting freight out of metropolitan Melbourne for transport to and from northern destinations.

As it stands Strathbogie Shire and surrounding LGA’s will see little benefit from inland rail as it will simply be a case of faster and larger trains travelling through the region without stopping or offering economic benefit. The building of a freight intermodal within the local government area would change that position and offer significant ongoing benefit to the region and the rail network.

3. The processes for the selection and refinement of the Inland Rail route and whether these processes are fit-for-purpose, including consideration of benefits and impacts.

Do you consider ARTC’s approach to engaging communities on the route is fit-for-purpose?

How could ARTC improve its engagement with communities and stakeholders along the route in regard to the processes used to consider benefits and impacts?

Response: It is difficult to provide a response to this theme, given that the community consultation approach for the route was approximately undertaken in 2014. Current staff at Strathbogie were not involved in the process and therefore unable to comment on its appropriateness.

4. The effectiveness of ARTC’s community and stakeholder engagement processes, and opportunities for improvement, including ARTC’s approach to addressing community concerns.

What has ARTC done well in engaging with communities, including addressing community concerns?

In what ways could ARTC improve its communication and engagement processes with communities and stakeholders?

How could ARTC improve its engagement with communities and stakeholders in responding to concerns?

Response: Throughout the design solution process and ongoing, Strathbogie Shire Council has advocated strongly to the ARTC that deliberative engagement would have been the best way to ensure the community was involved in a meaningful way. Specifically in Euroa, Victoria, we believe very strongly the community's preference should be the solution implemented by the ARTC.

In addition, to put it really simply - our community did not feel it has been part of the decision-making.

We believe best practice engagement can ally Council and our community's fears. When implemented well, deliberative engagement has huge benefits for all involved. Just a few of these are:

- It increases participants knowledge, resulting in more informed and considered views;
- It builds trust between authorities and communities through greater transparency;
- It ensures open and honest discussion; and
- It ensures the community is involved in the decision making.

As a Council we know the thought of deliberative engagement is daunting.

To promise to implement what the community decides, or to incorporate the community's advice and recommendations to the maximum extent possible, can feel difficult or risky.

We believe people make good decisions when they are given the time, information and authority to decide.

Improving engagement with communities through best practice approaches and being honest with the community in what was negotiable and non-negotiable would have strengthened the engagement process.