



28 November 2019

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

RE: SENATE COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT OF THE INLAND RAIL PROJECT BY THE AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION AND THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is pleased to provide this submission to the Senate inquiry on the *Management of the Inland Rail project by the Australian Rail Track Corporation and the Commonwealth Government*.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is an independent think tank and executive member network, providing research focused on excellence in social and economic infrastructure. We exist to shape public debate and drive reform for the national interest.

Now that Inland Rail is underway, governments should focus on its completion

The Inland Rail is a nationally significant undertaking that has been assessed as a priority project by Infrastructure Australia and forms part of the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy. The project has received funding commitment from the Federal Government in the form of equity investment through ARTC. Procurement and construction are underway on the NSW sections of the line.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia acknowledges the significant public resources already invested in Inland Rail, and advocate for the inquiry to focus on timely project delivery and maximising the project's benefits.

The capacity and alignment must be optimised to realise the full economic benefits

It is imperative that the full economic benefits of this project are realised to justify the significant, circa \$10 billion contribution of the Australian taxpayer. The business case is based on a straight route that delivers freight between Melbourne and Brisbane in less than 24 hours. If the project is not seen as a viable alternative to road freight, it will not deliver the promised freight cost savings, or reduction in truck numbers and associated carbon emission reduction.

For this reason, the capacity and alignment of the rail line should be optimised for project outcomes, while adjustments to placate competing stakeholder interests should be avoided. Individual concerns should be treated fairly and respectfully, but should be considered in the context of the substantial public benefits that



would be foregone should a suboptimal alignment prevail.

The project should be future-proofed through corridor preservation

It is also imperative that the capacity of the line is adequately future-proofed. Freight corridor preservation should be undertaken to allow future expansion of the rail line's capacity, and intermodal connections. The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy Action Plan lists Inland Rail as a key freight corridor that must be protected from encroachment. The corridor between Acacia Ridge and the Port of Brisbane, for example, must be preserved for a future dedicated freight rail line, separate to the passenger rail line. While a shared line is currently sufficient, adequate room must be maintained for the construction of new capacity to service future freight volume.

Private sector investment requires project certainty

Inter-governmental coordination is key for project delivery and private sector confidence. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia encourages the resolution of all outstanding points of difference between stakeholders on scope and design. For the project to realise its potential to attract and stimulate business activity, the private sector must know that all sections of the line are going ahead, and when they are to be delivered. At a time when infrastructure investment is increasingly seen as an economic lever, the government is in a position to stimulate activity through delivery certainty of Inland Rail.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. Should you require further information please contact Mr Hamilton Hayden, Senior Policy Adviser on (02) 9152 6018 or hamilton.hayden@infrastructure.org.au.

Yours Sincerely



ADRIAN DWYER
Chief Executive Officer