



Media Release

04 May 2018

GAME ON! Gilgandra the Construction Hub for Inland Rail For immediate release.

Gilgandra Shire Council's Mayor and General Manager hosted executive members of ARTC and staff from Federal Government on Tuesday, 1 May 2018 to discuss opportunities and impacts of the Inland Rail for Gilgandra Shire.

The meeting was attended by Warren Truss, incoming Chairman of ARTC as well as a number of significant personnel, including John Fullerton, CEO & Managing Director, ARTC; Peter Winder, current CEO Inland Rail ARTC; Richard Wankmuller, incoming CEO Inland Rail ARTC; Helena Orel, NSW Stakeholder Engagement Lead ARTC; the Federal Government's Executive Director Inland Rail & Rail Policy Department Infrastructure & Regional Development and Cities (DIRDC), Phil Smith; Regional & Industry Benefits Inland Rail (DIRDC), Melita Lanagan-King; Erica Tudor, on behalf of Mark Coulton's office as well as key Council staff.

The meeting's purpose was two-fold; in response to requests from Council inviting key personnel to visit our region and gain a better understanding of issues faced by locals, and secondly as part of the ARTC Inland Rail tour introducing the new Chairman of the board and CEO. Council took the opportunity at this meeting to discuss the opportunities for Gilgandra and its local businesses with this project.

David Neeves, General Manager says,

“Council is already in planning stages for opportunities that exist during construction and post construction for our Shire, while continuing to lobby for landholders and the wider community with the challenges that will be faced during this time.”

The meeting discussed the impacts to landholders and the wider consultation process.

Mr Neeves says,

“Council continues to reinforce to both ARTC and the Federal Government the significant numbers of landowners impacted in the Gilgandra Shire. Gilgandra Shire is one of the largest impacted Shires along the entire Inland Rail route with approximately 95kms of the new rail line proposed, and some 100 potentially directly impacted landholders within the current study corridor.”

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He adds,

“It was a timely discussion of the opportunities to provide better consultation not only with directly impacted landholders but also the wider community and local Councils, with the recent announcement from Inland Rail of the commitment to form Community Consultative Committees and Local Government Reference Groups.”

The Community Consultative Committees are being established by ARTC as part of their commitment to working closely with landholders and local communities particularly during the development of the environmental impact study and concept design phases. Three committees will be established, with one expected to be in the Gilgandra area, and there are currently calls for nominations for these committees, you can find out more by visiting our website www.gilgandra.nsw.gov.au/grow/inlandrail.

ARTC will, over the coming weeks announce the selected company to undertake the extensive Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the Narramine to Narrabri project. The EIS process is expected to take 18 months.

On Friday 4 May, the NSW Government and the Federal Government formally signed the Intergovernmental agreement. The agreement provides certainty for the delivery of Inland Rail in NSW, and includes a commitment to negotiate a new long-term lease with the ARTC and protect the rail corridor.

Mr Neeves believes that people need to be aware of the progress of this significant project.

“Many people still don’t understand that this project is going to happen. We encouraged ARTC to have a greater presence within our community to be available to answer the community’s enquiries and it was reassuring that Mr Truss spoke to his strong commitment in working with communities to ensure they are properly consulted.”

Furthermore, the importance of connectivity was raised and the ability to access Inland Rail from the existing Dubbo – Coonamble line, owned by the Country Rail Network.

Mr Neeves says,

“We want our regional suppliers and industries to access efficient transport networks, and the inland rail presents a further opportunity for this, particularly for the benefit of grain producers in our Shire. In developing connectivity at Curban, there is greater benefit, not only to those in our Shire, but Coonamble, Warren, Warrumbungle and Walgett districts also.

Without efficient connectivity, it really questions what benefits the Inland Rail will have for our region and many producers mirror these thoughts.

Connecting the current rail line, which is part of the State owned Country Rail

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Network, with the proposed inland rail will be a key driver for Council and we intend to continue to advocate for connectivity with the State and Federal Governments.”

As the construction phase at the Parkes to Narromine section is drawing closer, the meeting touched on the opportunities for Gilgandra Shire in the N2N (Narromine to Narrabri) construction phase, with Council promoting Gilgandra as the construction hub for this section of Inland Rail.

Mayor, Doug Batten says

“While we continue to be advocates for our landholders, we want to ensure our community as a whole can benefit from the opportunities Inland rail can offer our Shire, and become part of the solution. We are ready, willing and able to take advantage of Inland Rail construction phase, and we want to ensure our local businesses are ready also.”

Cr Batten adds,

“The Narromine to Narrabri section is approximately 300km and Gilgandra is within 1 hour travel time for more than half of the section. We highlighted in the meeting the competitive advantages of being located so close and the opportunities that exist during construction and post construction with serviced industrial land, accommodation facilities and utilising Gilgandra’s businesses and services.”

The emphasis on a significant contribution from locals was highlighted, with the need for local content and participation to be emphasised in the tender process.

“Council want to see employment opportunities for locals during the construction phase, including youth and indigenous opportunities. We want to provide support for local businesses in capacity building including training and upskilling opportunities for local and generally making sure our community is Inland Rail ready. We know that there is substantial work involved in the Inland Rail project, and local participation is a critical focus for Council. This is a billion dollar project, we are unlikely to see a construction project of this scale again and our local community must get their fair share of this pie” says Mr Neeves.

Council is also willing to work with ARTC to find sustainable solutions to the sourcing of water needed during the construction phase. A civil construction project of this scale will use considerable amounts of water

Cr Batten says,

“Council feels there is an opportunity to develop a project to source a sustainable water source or sources along the rail corridor. We would be making sure that the water sourced does not compete with current stock and domestic supplies. The intent is that this infrastructure will remain post

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construction leaving a legacy of new water infrastructure. We know that ground water is scarce in some areas and this project presents an opportunity for real long term benefits.”

To find out more information on the Inland Rail, or nominations for the Community Consultative Committees, visit www.gilgandra.nsw.gov.au/grow/inlandrail or www.inlandrail.com.au. You can also contact Council directly on 6817 8800, email council@gilgandra.nsw.gov.au or visit us at Warren Road.

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