



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

**Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Riverina**

Ref: MC20-007457

23 OCT 2020

Mr James Jackson
President
NSW Farmers Association
PO Box 459
ST LEONARDS NSW 1590

J. me
Dear Mr Jackson

Thank you for your letters of 4 September 2020 and 20 October 2020, co-signed by Ms Stephanie Stanhope, along with the attached letter from Holding Redlich of 15 July 2020 to Mr Wankmuller, CEO of Inland Rail, regarding your concerns about the hydrological modelling developed by Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) for the Narramine to Narrabri (N2N) section of Inland Rail.

Public safety remains the highest priority for the Australian Government and ARTC. I am confident that ARTC will develop and build world leading engineering solutions that take account of the local geology, hydrology and land use patterns to ensure that the design of Inland Rail is safe.

I note from Mr Wankmuller's correspondence of 31 July 2020 in response to Holding Redlich that ARTC has to date consulted with a broad range of stakeholders, including all the impacted local Councils and more than 100 landholders in regard to its flood modelling. In addition, ARTC has established the independently chaired Community Consultative Committee (CCC) with sub-groups for Narramine, Gilgandra and Narrabri to provide communities with a regular forum to engage ARTC on matters that are important to them, including progress on the hydrological modelling.

In developing its hydrological modelling, ARTC has taken into account the flood models used by the Narrabri and Narramine Councils and the Narrabri Flood Plain Risk Management Committee. In addition to this, the key knowledge of flood events, gained from landholders ARTC has met with, has been used to inform and test the accuracy of its hydrological models.

In regard to your request that the Australian Government provide your organisations with Commonwealth funding to engage an independent expert to review ARTC's hydrological model, I note that an independent review of ARTC's modelling is a mandated requirement of the NSW Government for the N2N Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

I am advised that BMT are undertaking this review and that their report will form part of the EIS documentation that will be released for public exhibition by the NSW Government. This requirement is consistent with that set by the NSW Government for the independent hydrological review undertaken for the North Star to Border EIS.

In relation to the Independent Panel of Experts for Flood Studies (Panel) in Queensland, it is important to note that, unlike the NSW Government, the Queensland Government does not mandate an independent review of hydrological modelling as part of its EIS conditions. Noting this fact and in response to community views, the Australian and Queensland Governments established the Panel. As such, the Panel effectively provides an equivalent level of review to that already provided for by the NSW Government through its EIS process.

I am advised that, in relation to the N2N project, ARTC is planning to hold a series of public information sessions, including an additional round of CCC meetings in November 2020. These information sessions will cover a range of topics in relation to the route's alignment, flood modelling and a range of property matters, including acquisition processes and factors to be considered in compensation.

Mr Wankmuller has confirmed to me that he and/or the N2N project team are available to meet at a time of your members' convenience to discuss their concerns and to identify specific issues that may need to be addressed by ARTC. This would replicate the engagement approach undertaken by ARTC for the North Star to Border section of Inland Rail.

I encourage you and your members to engage with ARTC to ensure you and your members have access to the latest information on flood modelling and design work being undertaken by ARTC, and are getting the information needed to make decisions in regard to their farms as the development of the N2N section of Inland Rail progresses.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

I have written in similar terms to Ms Stanhope, President, Country Women's Association of NSW.

Yours sincerely

Michael McCormack