

Robert and Rosemary Webb

Our first correspondence from Inland Rail is dated 16th October 2017. This came as rather a surprise in that we had been led to believe that the eastern alignment was not under consideration (see attached fact sheet emailed). Needless to say, the news came as a great shock to us and adjacent landowners. There had been no communication with the residents of Villeneuve Estate and High Park Estate.

In the following months we did our utmost to understand the thinking behind the change in route selection. Several meetings at our home followed. In addition to this, we also attended drop in sessions and public meetings in Narromine. We came to the conclusion that the people representing the ARTC had little or no understanding of the day to day function of the rural community at large.

This was disappointing as we were constantly meeting and speaking with different team members. We were of the opinion that this may have been a deliberate tactic of the ARTC team to prevent any continued dialogue between meetings.

We have done our best to explain the very real flooding issues associated with the eastern alignment (see emailed attached photos of Webb family being evacuated from Dappo woolshed in February 1955).

ARTC have taken on board some of this information. We are still very much in the dark as to how they plan to traverse the Webb Siding outflow from the Macquarie River without creating flooding problems in the surrounding landscape. We are also unsure how they plan to traverse the areas to our south and southeast which have significant runoff events from the Harvey Ranges. We feel that they will encounter serious issues with the very boggy nature of some of the eastern route selection.

We might also mention some of the many toxic aspects attached to ARTC activities in Narromine Shire. They include proposed road closures, reduced rail crossings, devalued land and structural assets, just to name a few.

In an effort to overcome ARTC's lack of understanding of rural issues, they have belatedly included an agronomist, John Wilcox, on their team. In all our conversations with the ARTC he is the only person we feel has made a real attempt to get answers to our questions at the last drop in session (see emailed attachment of questions and answers from InlandRail 10th September 2019).

One question we asked was:

Who was present at the meeting when the decision was made to change the route to the eastern alignment?

This is the main reason behind our objection to the route selection process. **We were not given a fair chance to voice our opinions when the western alignment was being debated.**

We remain dissatisfied with the answer provided to this question in particular. Until this matter is given clarity, we remain suspicious of events leading up to and surrounding the change of alignment from west to east.

We feel that our two local members Mark Coulton (Parkes) and Dugald Saunders (Dubbo) in conjunction with Narromine Mayor Craig Davies, have all failed to present a balanced story regarding Inland Rail's intentions.

We also feel that the ARTC should not be allowed to fund any community-based activity that may be seen as pork barrelling the project at tax payer expense.

Needless to say, the uncertainty surrounding the decision-making process has created an atmosphere of fear and distrust of the integrity of the route selection process. We might also add that it has taken an obscene amount of our time to seek answers from an organisation which we now perceive as highly skilled in evading answers

Our question to the Senate Inquiry is: **Is it still possible to examine the feasibility of rerouting Inland Rail from Parkes through to the west of Dubbo and/or taking the route further to the west of Narromine township?**

We believe there may be both substantial cost savings and efficiencies achieved by adopting either of the above-mentioned route selections.

The elephant in the room for all inland towns at present is the looming lack of water. Inland Rail will need to consider carefully both the cost and availability of water as it traverses the extremely dry areas from Narromine to Narrabri.

It will also be interesting to see how many over budget costs the Inland Rail team are experiencing in the rebuilding of the Parkes to Narromine section of the rail corridor.

We thank you for providing us with an opportunity to express some of fears and misgivings surrounding the ARTC intentions in the Narromine to Narrabri route selection process.