



CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Mr Graham Clapham

The fourth meeting of the Southern Darling Downs Community Consultative Committee (the committee) was held at the Brookstead Hall on 7 November 2018.

This summary provides an overview of the meeting to share information with the community at the earliest opportunity. It is a precursor to the formal meeting minutes, which will be published on the Inland Rail website following endorsement by the committee.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Graham Clapham and attended by 13 of the 15 Southern Darling Downs committee members. Six Inner Darling Downs committee members also attended the meeting and participated with respect to the preliminary Condamine floodplain crossing agenda item. The meeting was observed by Dr John Macintosh, from Water Solutions, who has been appointed by the committee to provide a review of the development of the Condamine floodplain crossing solution and other hydrology work. Ten community members also observed the meeting.

ARTC presented the preliminary Condamine floodplain crossing solution. ARTC has looked at numerous design options ranging from the phase 1 concept design, which included 1.8 kilometres of bridge openings, to a full viaduct with limited sections of embankment and culverts. ARTC advised that a full viaduct would present significant challenges for connectivity to existing infrastructure including local roads, private crossings and rail sidings. A full viaduct, at a high level to cater for standard road clearances, would also have significant high embankment approaches to the south beyond Hall Road and to the north beyond Elsdon Road outside of the floodplain. ARTC has now developed a preliminary design solution that they believe minimises flood changes while maintaining connectivity. This preliminary solution includes five bridges with nearly six kilometres of bridge openings; and embankments perforated with more than 540 culverts. Modelling indicates that in a 1% AEP (1 in 100-year flood), the preliminary solution would change flood behaviour at 33 private properties. Ten of those properties would experience increased flood levels at houses or sheds. In a 10% AEP (1 in 10-year flood), no houses or sheds would experience increased flood heights.

A committee member asserted that any change to flood heights was not acceptable and a full viaduct was the only acceptable solution for the community. ARTC responded that the design was preliminary, and they were committed to continuing to work closely with landowners to further validate the flood model and develop the design and mitigation measures to minimise and manage any changes to flood behaviour.

Committee members raised concerns about culvert blockage and stressed the importance of ongoing maintenance to ensure the culverts were clear. ARTC stated that the culverts had been designed with 25% additional capacity to allow for potential blockage, and that it had a responsibility to properly maintain the rail corridor to ensure the Inland Rail service offering of 98% travel time reliability could be met.

A committee member asked whether the Condamine floodplain area of the rail corridor would be fenced. ARTC responded that its policy was to fully fence the rail corridor; however, further work needs to be undertaken regarding fencing design for this section.

Committee members questioned how ARTC could design and cost the project before the geotechnical conditions were known. ARTC responded that it had received the raw data from the geotechnical investigations, which show that subsurface conditions in the boreholes of the Condamine floodplain area encountered extremely weathered, low-strength rock (silt stone and sandstone) and it had used this initial information to design the bridge piles. All geotechnical information is still to be confirmed post laboratory testing.

ARTC presented the focused area of investigation that it has identified within the two-kilometre-wide study area. The focused area of investigation varies in width depending on location, constraints and results of initial design investigations and stakeholder feedback. Over the coming months, ARTC will continue to develop the design, including bridges, the interface with public roads and private crossings, to identify a 40-60 metre rail corridor.

A committee member asked where crossing loops would be located in relation to townships as noise impacts were of concern. ARTC responded that five crossing loops would be required between the NSW/Qld border and Gowrie and that the locations of such were under development.

ARTC advised that the Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) had not yet been finalised by the Coordinator-General but were anticipated shortly. Field investigations to inform the EIS are ongoing and noise monitoring, cultural heritage surveys, and visual assessments will soon take place. ARTC also said that the Social Impact Assessment survey would open on 12 November 2018.

A committee member raised concern about how the community could adequately assess the social impacts and benefits when a procurement model had not yet been established for the project. ARTC undertook to look into this.

ARTC stated that investigations and design development were ongoing and advised that engagement with key stakeholders and potentially directly affected landowners was expected to continue over the coming weeks and months.

Committee members agreed the next meeting would be held in early 2019.

Mr Graham Clapham, Chair
Inland Rail Southern Darling Downs Community Consultative Committee
9 November 2018

Interested community members are welcome to attend committee meetings as observers. For more information please contact the Inland Rail Community Engagement team.

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