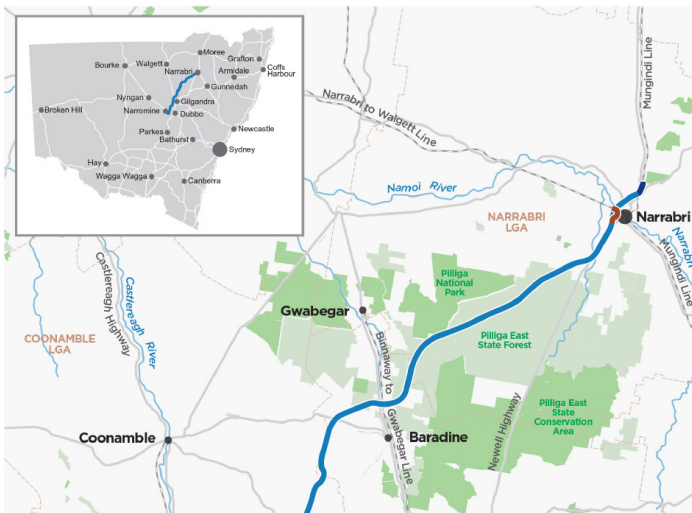


Crossing the Pilliga State Forest

The Pilliga State Forest portion comprises approximately one quarter of the 306km Narromine to Narrabri (N2N) greenfield section.

Once built, the N2N 'missing link' will connect the Narrabri to North Star and completed Parkes to Narromine sections to enable a freight rail connection between Melbourne and Brisbane in under 24 hrs.

The 76km Inland Rail route traverses a semi-arid woodland comprising five State Forests managed by the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW), traditionally reserved for use by primary industries.



The route, in blue, through the Pilliga State Forest

Why was the Pilliga route chosen?

The N2N route was determined over a 15-year period of extensive stakeholder consultation and various route option assessments.

This final alignment through the Pilliga State Forest was validated following a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) of all options. Key findings were:

- Improved safety through fewer public transport interfaces
- Approximately 35 fewer private properties impacted
- Reduced noise and vibration impacts to residences
- Improved geotechnical conditions and reduced hydrology impacts, being higher in the catchment
- Reduced freight travel times by seven minutes; supporting the Inland Rail Service Offering.

What approvals are still required?

Prior to Inland Rail taking possession of the land parcels required to construct the rail corridor, a final statutory process must occur.

The Pilliga State Forest is Crown Land that is dedicated as a State Forest under the *NSW Forestry Act 2012*. For access to be granted this dedication must be revoked by the NSW Parliament. The land can then be acquired by Transport for NSW and leased to Inland Rail for construction to begin.

All primary planning approvals have been secured.

In February 2023 the NSW Minister for Planning approved the project, subject to conditions. The approval process involved field studies and investigations, modelling and consultation with stakeholders to develop an understanding of N2N's potential impacts and mitigation measures. This is documented in the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In February 2024, N2N was approved, with conditions, by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*.

Inland Rail continues to consult with the FCNSW and other key Pilliga stakeholders to better understand the area and inform the detailed plans and strategies required to satisfy the conditions of approval.

What is Inland Rail doing to manage environmental impacts?

At Inland Rail, we are committed to responsibly managing, minimising and mitigating unavoidable environmental impacts of the project and acknowledge this is a fundamental expectation of communities along our alignment.

We recognise the local community has a strong appreciation of the ecological values connected to the flora and fauna of the Pilliga forests.

Inland Rail is working closely with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation and Science (BCS) division of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) to understand and minimise impacts on the area's flora and fauna habitats. Two key initiatives are bolstering our knowledge of the region and will help reduce construction and operational impacts on the natural environment.

Fauna Connectivity Strategy

To minimise impacts on fauna once the alignment is built and operational, Inland Rail has developed a preliminary Fauna Connectivity Strategy in consultation with BCS. The strategy is included in the updated Biodiversity Development Assessment Report and is publicly available.

To view the route in detail including the structures in the rail corridor visit inlandrail.info/N2Nmap or scan the QR code.



The strategy identifies fauna connectivity measures to maintain stable populations. Proposed measures include:

- 51 dedicated fauna underpasses with fauna furniture to encourage the movement under the rail line
- 55 canopy bridges at regular intervals and wooden barrier poles at selected bridges
- Landscaping and fencing of the rail corridor to encourage movement towards crossing structures.

A final Fauna Connectivity Strategy will identify the type and location of all connectivity structures to be included in the N2N section's detailed design.

Managing impacts during construction

Management of environmental impacts during construction will be documented in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), to be prepared by the construction contractor in consultation with relevant agencies.

The CEMP will outline the project's commitments to environmental management, including the identification of environmental aspects to be managed, and how environmental values will be protected and enhanced. Examples of strategies include:

- Undertaking pre-clearing surveys and relocating fauna prior to clearing.
- Rehabilitating of land not required for the permanent rail corridor to match surrounding environment and support habitat.

The CEMP will be regularly updated to address community concerns and reflect changes in environmental management procedures, new techniques and relevant legislative requirements.

Environmental impacts during operation will be managed by ARTC's Environmental Management System.



Looking south along Pilliga Forest Way to where the Inland Rail corridor will be located.

Avoiding cultural and historic impacts

Cultural heritage investigations undertaken during N2N EIS development found Indigenous cultural heritage in the proposed rail corridor.

The Cumbil Forests Creek location contains a 0.5ha grinding groove site that is highly significant to the Gomeroi People as a place where Aboriginal men once worked. The grinding grooves represent a key remaining visible aspect of Indigenous culture and are evidence of Indigenous occupation of the broader region.

Based on the recommendations of Indigenous community members and archaeological experts, we realigned the route to avoid and preserve this site. We continue to engage with and seek feedback from local traditional owners.

How will emergencies be managed?

During construction, our civil contractor will manage emergencies in accordance with their Safety Management Plan, which will be developed in consultation with FCNSW.

During operations, ARTC will manage fire risk in accordance with standard operating procedures. ARTC is working closely with FCNSW to agree on site specific approaches including:

- Agreement that trains will not traverse the Pilliga forests during a fire
- Supply of mobile ramps and any necessary training to FCNSW to allow excavators and other firefighting equipment to traverse the rail line during a bushfire
- Support via additional resources to manage fire season risk.

How many level crossings are proposed?

Seventeen public level crossings are proposed in the Pilliga State Forest. Crossing types will be confirmed during the detailed design process.

Once Inland Rail is operational, FCNSW will be responsible for signage maintenance in its capacity as the road manager.

Will public use be impacted?

Inland Rail will endeavour to minimise impacts to recreational use in the Pilliga State Forest during construction. With 17 public level crossings proposed for installation, we anticipate minimal to no impact on general public access and use of roads within the Pilliga forest after construction.

Once the line is operational, ARTC will ensure safety along the entire N2N alignment by complying with all relevant National Rail Safety Standards, overseen by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR).

Key features of the Inland Rail alignment through the Pilliga State Forest will include:



RAIL CORRIDOR
Constructing approx
76km of new rail corridor



CROSSING LOOPS
1 crossing loop up to
2.2km long



CROSSINGS
17 new level crossings



DRAINAGE STRUCTURES
23 bridges and
137 flood culverts

 **Want to know more?**

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