

MEETING MINUTES

Narrabri to North Star Inland Rail (Phase 2)

Community Reference Group

DATE / TIME

6 March 2024
4.35 pm

LOCATION

Social Co-house, 167 Balo Street, Moree

FACILITATOR

Michael Silver OAM

MINUTE TAKER

Michael Silver OAM

DISTRIBUTION

N2NS (Phase 2) CRG

ATTENDEES

- ▶ Michael Silver (Independent Chair)
- ▶ Rodney Schoupp (Community Member)
- ▶ Alexander Munro (Community Member)
- ▶ Terry Haynes (Moree Gun Club)
- ▶ Meryl Dillon (Community Member)
- ▶ Christopher Hartin (Moree Floodplain Committee)
- ▶ Angus Witherby (Community Member)
- ▶ Rebecca English (Moree Plains Shire Council)
- ▶ Isabella Hall (Inland Rail)
- ▶ Martin Singleton (Inland Rail)
- ▶ Butch Rossouw (IRDJV)
- ▶ Rececca Phyland (NGH)

APOLOGIES

- ▶ Karen Craigie (Community Member)
- ▶ Steve McIntosh (Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council)
- ▶ Michael Murphy (Community Member)
- ▶ Mark Connolly (Moree Plains Shire Council)
- ▶ Cr Mark Johnson (Mayor, Moree Plains Shire Council)
- ▶ Sonia Rowe (Community Member)
- ▶ Michael Lahoud (NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure)

OBSERVERS

- ▶ John Zannes (Transport for NSW) [video link]
- ▶ Belinda Scott (NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure)
- ▶ Max Obiakor (NSW Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure)
- ▶ Melanie Elms (Inland Rail)
- ▶ Lauren Marer (Inland Rail)
- ▶ Michael Law (Inland Rail) [video link]
- ▶ Caroline Osborne (IRDJV)
- ▶ Clarissa Farrington (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications) [video link]
- ▶ Shirani Elasinghe (Moree Plains Shire Council)

Discussions

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
1. Welcome	The Chair welcomed all members and observers to the meeting. Mr Silver particularly welcomed the representatives of the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure attending the meeting.

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
2. Acknowledgement of Country	The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting is being held and recognised their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture, paying respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.
3. Declarations of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Silver – Pecuniary interest – expenses of Independent Chair borne by ARTC.
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting noted that the minutes of previous meeting of the Community Reference Group held on 6 December 2023 were approved on 18 January 2024.
5. Business Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meryl Dillon questioned the accuracy of comments attributed to her in Section 7.2 of the Proponent’s Report relating to the potential impacts of noise walls on flooding. The Chair noted the comments and indicated he would review the notations made in the Minutes to better reflect her concerns and comments on the matter. Mr Silver advised he would forward a revised minute to Ms Dillion for her consideration. ACTION
6. Actions	<p>6.1 That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide an overview of the requirements of the EPBC Act and the areas of natural environment within the N2NS (Phase 2) project that are likely to be subject to ‘controlled action’ requirements under the Act.</p> <p>Response: Presentation by Ms Rebecca Phyland, Senior Regional Manager & Principal Ecologist NGH. <i>A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Phyland stepped the Committee through the presentation and the requirements of the Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act. She noted that the assessment methodology is a scientific process and is conducted in accordance with the regulatory requirements.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Phyland outlined the requirements of the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM). She advised that the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) is soon to be submitted and it may be placed on public exhibition. Notwithstanding this it will be available online.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Phyland advised that under EPBC Act only significantly impacted communities are addressed under the BAM process. She highlighted that seasonal targeted assessments have been undertaken over the last couple of years.</i></p> <p><i>The Chair questioned whether, due to environmental factors over the last few years (drought, floods), historical data had been used in the final assessment process. Ms Phyland advised that all assessments had been undertaken on site and historical data had only been used in the preliminary assessment processes. She added that repeat surveys had been undertaken over multiple years to ensure completeness of the data.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Phyland advised that there has been ongoing consultation with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation and Science Directorate. It has been satisfied that the process has been robust and thorough. Ms Phyland highlighted the work undertaken to date:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 field investigations between 2019 and 2024 Targeted surveys for 9 flora species and 16 fauna species 78 BAM plots Of 16 fauna species, 3 detected – Barking Owl, Koala, Bristle-faced Free-tailed Bat

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Of 23 targeted flora species, 2 species were detected: Creeping Tick-trefoil, Finger Panic Grass</i> <p><i>Ms Phyland suggested that offsets maybe required. The Chair enquired where offsets had been identified. Ms Phyland advised that this had not occurred at this stage and that design considerations and other treatments may be applied to address residual impacts. She stressed that wherever possible, measures are taken to avoid and minimise these impacts.</i></p> <p><i>Butch Rossouw expressed his appreciation to the Moree community during the research and data collection processes over the last few years in preparation of the environmental assessments.</i> COMPLETED</p> <p>6.2 That at the next CRG meeting, Transport for NSW provide advice as to whether the same level (height) of the Newell Highway (north of Moree) will be maintained during proposed upgrade works and how many additional culverts will be installed.</p> <p><i>Response: John Zannes (TfNSW) advised that, at this point, there has been no change proposed to the existing design. Mr Zannes advised that he had requested the design be reviewed having regard to the design proposed for the Inland Rail project design. He advised he would further report at the next meeting.</i> ONGOING</p> <p>6.3 That at the next meeting, Moree Plains Shire Council be invited to make a presentation on the Special Activation Precinct (SAP) Master Plan and the Precinct's integration with the Inland Rail Narrabri to North Star (Phase 2) Project and advise what criteria is used by Government to assess funding for these projects.</p> <p><i>Response: A presentation on Special Activation Precinct Master was made by Rebecca English, Regional Activation Co-ordinator, Moree Plains Shire Council.</i> <i>A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English provided an overview of Moree Plains Shire Council's Regional Activation team responsible for the delivery of the SAP project. She highlighted the role and responsibilities of the team with a particular focus on economic development. She noted the significance of the team to Moree's future development which falls under the direction of the Executive Manager Regional Activation.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English noted that there are more than \$2 billion in critical community infrastructure projects on the agenda across the Moree Plains:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Special Activation Precinct \$224.8M – infrastructure works to commence 2025/26.</i> ▪ <i>Hospital Redevelopment \$80M – construction to begin 2024.</i> ▪ <i>Inland Rail – N2NS Phase 1 completed, NS2B and N2NS Phase 2 planned.</i> ▪ <i>Newell Highway upgrades \$261M – Moree to Narrabri road works 2022-2025; \$330M for works north of Moree 2024-2028.</i> <p><i>Ms English highlighted that a considerable amount of local produce is shipped out of the Moree Plains Shire for subsequent processing. She suggested that numerous opportunities exist for value adding and processing produce that is produced locally that would provide significant economic benefit to the Moree community.</i></p>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p><i>By way of background, Ms English noted that \$1 billion had been allocated by the NSW Government for regional development from the sale of Snowy Hydro to the Australia Government. Consequently, six SAPs were identified across regional NSW, however following a NSW government infrastructure review only three projects have been retained – Waga Wagga, Parkes, and Moree.</i></p> <p><i>Moree has been allocated \$224.8 million in initial funding to support upfront local infrastructure (subdivision design, roads, and utilities) development costs within the SAP. The funding allocation will focus on the northern portion of the SAP. The principal benefits for investors establishing a business in a Special Activation Precinct is that it cuts red tape thus reducing the cost.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English highlighted that potentially 4000 jobs will be created over the 40 years. To date interest has been shown by ‘big end employers’ with these local businesses having been assessed un the NSW SAP planning process.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English provided a detailed overview of the SAP master plan noting the significance of the proposed east-west connector corridor – the southern bypass. The proposed connector is subject to a \$44 million overpass of the Newell Highway and Northwestern Rail Line. She advised that 70% of the produce from the Shire comes from the west and is trucked through south Moree.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed overpass was to be funded by the Australian Government, NSW Government and Moree Plains Shire Council. However, the Federal Infrastructure review has seen the \$35 million allocated by the Australian Government withdrawn. She added that the proposed overpass is the critical component of the southern bypass and removing heavy vehicle traffic from the southern residential sections of Moree.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English explained the intermodal component of the SAP, noting that a 5.8 kilometres long rail siding is to be constructed to support the intermodal capability. Chris Hartin questioned the current access to the rail line. Ms English acknowledged that this is problematic at present. She added that the Louis Drefus Company (LDC) currently has access to the rail line via rail siding, but this is limited to 800 metres long trains.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English indicated that Moree Plains Shire Council continues to seek opportunities to fund the proposed southern bypass.</i></p> <p><i>Sandy Munro suggested that there are a variety of opportunities that the SAP could provide including potential coal movement from the Ashford mine to transfer of biodegradable products from the Sydney metropolitan area to support agricultural soil enrichment in the Moree area.</i></p> <p><i>Ms English advised that strategic planning and design work associated with the SAP continues, to ensure the benefits of the SAP are maximised for the community, noting there is still considerable commercial interest in the Moree SAP.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">COMPLETED</p> <p>6.4 That a report on stationary trains at Moree and potential safety mitigation measures be presented to the next GRG meeting. <i>Response: Isabella Hall advised that a report, Pedestrian Safety in the Phase 1 N2NS project had addressed the issue of stationary trains at Moree.</i></p>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p><i>Additional response: Melanie Elms advised that because of further study work, a report on the matter will be presented to the next meeting.</i></p> <p>DEFERRED</p> <p><i>Chair's Note: The Proponent advises that in February 2022, a thorough risk assessment and community consultation process was completed, with key safety mitigation measures proposed for pedestrians illegally crossing the rail line south of the Moree Station. This process identified that the existing illegal crossing route leads pedestrians to an open space where a section of the fence is cut to provide a well-known shortcut for community members on the eastern side of the rail line. To mitigate this illegal crossing issue and better integrate Moree East with the remainder of the community, the following key recommendations were outlined in the N2NS Traffic Connectivity Ministers Conditions of Approval (MCoA) Report:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The installation of pedestrian exclusion fencing on the Eastern Side of the rail alignment adjacent to the track.</i> <i>2. A detour walkway, beautified with relevant local indigenous and historical landscaping, connecting through to the station LX and back down to Jones Avenue.</i> <i>3. An increased on-demand bus service as an alternate mode of transport for community members.</i> <p><i>Further, it should be noted that the upgrade of Stage 2C, the section between Tapscott Road to Alice Street, has been paused and will be reactivated at a future date once the delivery regime north of Parkes has been confirmed by the Australian Government. This will allow for the development of an alternative signalling design that better meets the complex interface needs of the proposed Moree SAP and ARTC operational requirements.</i></p> <p><i>I am advised that it is unlikely that further information on the Stage 2C design will be available at the next meeting.</i></p>
7	<p>Correspondence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nil
8	<p>NSW Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure</p> <p>The Chair invited Belinda Scott, Senior Planner, Transport Assessments, NSW Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure to address the meeting. Ms Scott noted the status of the Phase 2 project and the Department's interest in receiving community feedback. She also noted that the Department was awaiting receipt of the Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) and in particular the Proponent's response to the Department's request for further information on flooding, hydrology, and noise. Ms Scott was unsure whether the PIR would be publicly exhibited but indicated it would be available on the Department's website.</p> <p>Angus Witherby advocated for public exhibition of the PIR, noting past challenges regarding the transparency of the planning assessment process. He suggested that exhibition allows the community to see how the concerns that have been raised in the submission process have been addressed.</p> <p>Martin Singleton noted that the Response to Submissions (RTS) does address the questions raised in the submissions with the PIR providing an additional layer of information.</p> <p>The Chair thank Ms Scott for her input.</p>
9	<p>Proponent's Report</p> <p><i>Isabella Hall, Stakeholder Engagement Lead – Central presented the Proponent's Report.</i></p>

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<p data-bbox="507 293 1078 322"><i>A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.</i></p> <p data-bbox="507 344 884 374">9.1 Noise Mitigation Consultation</p> <ul data-bbox="555 398 1439 2018" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="555 398 1439 483">• Isabella Hall provided an update on Noise Mitigation consultation. She highlighted the request from DPHI for additional information on noise mitigation and the consultation processes associated with addressing the issue. <li data-bbox="555 488 1439 546">• Ms Hall also noted that DPHI had also requested more detailed analysis of flooding issues as part preparation of the PIR. <li data-bbox="555 551 1439 696">• Ms Hall noted that 18 properties (with an additional two residences [granny-flats] being identified during the consultation process) have been identified as being subject to exceedances to the standards set out in the Rail Infrastructure Noise Guideline (NSW EPA, 2013) (RING). She highlighted the properties shown on the map at Slide 24. <li data-bbox="555 701 1439 815">• Ms Hall stepped the Group through the Operational Noise Mitigation Options. The two options being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="651 757 938 786">▪ At-Property Treatment <li data-bbox="651 790 815 819">▪ Noise Wall <li data-bbox="555 824 1439 938">• At-Property Treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="651 853 1294 882">○ Generally applied to the façade facing the noise source. <li data-bbox="651 887 1410 916">○ Can include double glazing, door replacement and air conditioning. <li data-bbox="651 920 1430 949">○ The ability to reduce noise, varies dependant on house construction. <li data-bbox="555 954 1439 1144">• Noise Wall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="651 983 1439 1041">○ Noise barriers or walls are common along transport corridors such as highways and rail lines. <li data-bbox="651 1046 1439 1104">○ A noise barrier is often made from concrete panels and, in this case, can stand up to 6.5 metres (m) above ground level. <li data-bbox="651 1108 1439 1144">○ Aesthetic design to be chosen in consultation with the community if it is preferred mitigation option. <li data-bbox="555 1149 1439 1178">• Ms Hall advised that the Proponent’s preferred technical option is a noise wall. <li data-bbox="555 1182 1439 1296">• Ms Hall outlined the At-Property treatments and the basis by which they are applied. The Chair noted that the treatment benefits only relate to the interior of the residential building and will not mitigate noise to the exterior of the property. <li data-bbox="555 1301 1439 1386">• The Group reviewed the Noise Wall visualisations and discussed potential aesthetic treatments and mechanisms by which the community could be involved in design work. <li data-bbox="555 1391 1439 1505">• Ms Hall reported on the community barbeque held on 10 February 2024 as part of the Noise Mitigation consultation process. There were 12 attendees with a split between mitigation preferences. Ms Hall advised a further two one-on-one meeting were held following the barbeque. <li data-bbox="555 1509 1439 1657">• Ms Hall also advised that 15 one-on-one meetings had been held with both direct and indirect receivers. She noted that all sensitive receivers (approximately 50) received an ‘Operational Noise Information Pack. Ms Hall indicated that extensive discussion on noise impacts had occurred with property owners during the one-on-one meetings. <li data-bbox="555 1662 1439 1865">• Ms Hall outlined the process for the next round of consultation. She detailed the community barbeque to be held on 7 March 2024 where there will be a further opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues with DPHI representatives. Ms Hall advised that a survey on options for preferred noise mitigation treatments will be distributed to owners shortly. This will be sent to owners only. The outcome of the survey will determine the recommended option the Proponent will submit to DPHI. <li data-bbox="555 1870 1439 2018">• Ms Hall indicated that the feedback so far, suggested a preference for a noise wall on the east side of the line and At-property treatments on the west side. She added that it is important to understand that there is a trigger level for noise exceedance under the guidelines and this is what determines whether mitigation is required.

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meryll Dillion sought advice as to what action is taken if an exceedance occurs in the future. Ms Hall advised that there is ongoing compliance monitoring and if an exceedance is detected at a point in the future, it will be addressed at that time. Butch Rossouw added that a sensitivity analysis of noise results has been undertaken. He suggested it is therefore highly unlikely that the noise modelling results will be exceeded. Ms Hall extended an invitation to the Community Reference Group members to attend the community barbeque in the reserve at the end of Oak Street on 7 March commencing at 4.00 pm. She again highlighted the community survey to be sent out shortly. Rebecca English raised the difference between construction and operational noise. She noted that the focus has been on operational noise involving up to 20 trains per day. Martin Singleton advised that construction noise will be controlled by approval conditions and other legislation relating to hours of work. Tery Haynes enquired whether the earth bunds can be topped up to improve noise mitigation. Mr Singleton advised this will be considered in the Detailed Design along with other options associated with the mounds. Ms Hall advised that this will be her last CRG meeting, as she will be moving to the Border to Gowrie section of the Inland Rail project. She thanked the Group for their input and commitment during her time with the N2NS (Phase 2) project. She indicated Ms Melanie Elms will be taking on responsibilities associated with the CRG. The Chair thanked Ms Hall for her work associated with the CRG. Ms Hall suggested that a presentation on additional hydrology modelling may be a suitable topic for the next meeting.
10 Other Agenda Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil
10. General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meryll Dillon noted that trains were now transferring grain/canola from Croppa Creek to the Port of Newcastle. Alexander Munro supported her comments. <p>Meeting closed at 6.08 pm. The Chair thanked all for their attendance</p>

Actions

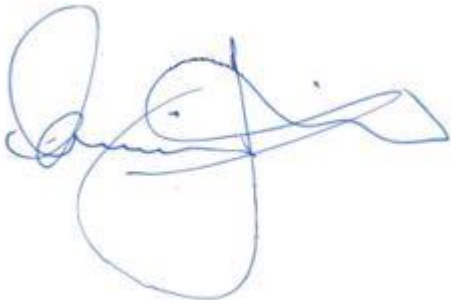
NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
1	That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide a detailed presentation on the hydrology and proposed flood management requirements associated with retention of the Camurra hairpin embankment.	COMPLETED Rob Leslie 11/10/23	31/12/2023
2	That at a future meeting, the Proponent provide an overview of the requirements of the EPBC Act and the areas of natural environment within the N2NS (Phase 2) project that are likely to be subject to 'controlled action' requirements under the Act.	COMPLETED Rebecca Phyland	06/03/2024
3	That at the next meeting, Moree Plains Shire Council be invited to make a presentation on the Special Activation Precinct Master Plan and the Precinct's integration with the Inland Rail Narrabri to North Star (Phase 2) Project.	COMPLETED Rebecca English	07/03/2024
4	That at the next meeting of the CRG, Transport for NSW be invited to make a presentation on the proposed Newell Highway upgrade works.	COMPLETED John Zannes	06/12/2023
5	That a presentation on Noise and Vibration Assessment be made to the next meeting of the CRG.	COMPLETED Butch Rossouw	06/12/2023

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
6	That advice be provided at the next meeting of the CRG on the use and benefits of smaller wheels on rail rolling stock and implications for double stack 1.8-kilometre-long trains.	COMPLETED Butch Rossouw	06/12/2023
7	That a report on stationary trains at Moree and potential safety mitigation measures be presented to the next GRG meeting.	DEFERRED Melanie Elms	01/07/2024
8	That at the next CRG meeting, Transport for NSW provide advice as to the whether the same level (height) of the Newell Highway (north of Moree) will be maintained during proposed upgrade works and how many additional culverts will be installed.	ONGOING John Zannes	01/07/2024
9	That as part of its presentation on the Special Activation Precinct (Action 2 above), that Moree Plains Shire Council also advise what criteria is used by Government to assess funding for these projects.	COMPLETED Rebecca English	06/03/2024
10	That the accuracy of comments attributed to Ms Dillon in Section 7.2 of the Proponent's Report relating to the potential impacts of noise walls on flooding be reviewed by the Chair.	Michael Silver COMPLETED	31/03/2024

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the N2NS (Phase 2) CRG will be held in June/July 2024 at a date to be confirmed.

Meeting minutes approved.



Michael J. Silver OAM
Independent Chair
27 March 2024