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Southern Darling Downs Community Consultative Committee Meeting

Date/Time 23 February 2026 6:00pm – 8:00pm		Location Yelarbon Memorial Hall Taloom Street, Yelarbon QLD 4388 <i>And online via Microsoft Teams</i>
Facilitator Emily Louden, Stakeholder Engagement Lead	Minute taker Emily Louden, Stakeholder Engagement Advisor	Distribution All attendees and CCC members
Chair Mr Graham Clapham Southern Darling Downs Committee		

Attendees

Inner Darling Downs Committee

- Mr Robert Barrett
- Mr Rick McDougall (online)
- Ms Maria Oliver (online)
- Mr Jeffrey Chandler
- Mr Andrew McCartney
- Ms Rosalie Millar
- Mr Robert Webb
- Ms Georgina Krieg

- Emily Louden
Stakeholder Engagement Lead
- Rebecca Murphy
Stakeholder Engagement Advisor
- Kirsten Elliot
Stakeholder Engagement Officer
- Naomi Tonscheck
Head of Stakeholder Relations

Inland Rail

- Robert Smith
Area Director B2G
- Andrew Roberts
Engineering Manager
- Zeb Dawson
Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Manager Qld

Audience

- NA

Apologies

- Mr Jeremy Hall
- Mr Lindsay Krieg

Guests (Show organisation if not IR)

Karen Oakley

Director, Transport Infrastructure & Projects
Industry and Infrastructure Development
Office of the Coordinator-General

Kirsty Elliott

Executive Director, Infrastructure and Planning
Office of the Coordinator-General

Discussions

NO.	COMMENTS
1.	<p>Welcome, introductions and acknowledgement Graham Clapham (GC) as Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Chair, Graham Clapham (GC), opened the meeting and introduced himself as Chair of the Committee. He noted that several Inland Rail presenters were in attendance for specific agenda items. – Zeb Dawson (ZD) delivered an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners of the land. – The Chair advised that Jeremy Hall (JH) had joined the Committee as the new representative from BNTAC. – The Chair formally acknowledged the attendance of representatives from the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG): Karen Oakley, Director – Infrastructure and Planning, and Kirsty Elliott, Executive Director. – The Chair confirmed that the meeting would proceed in line with the circulated agenda. He called for any declarations of conflicts of interest. – Rick McDougall (RM) declared a conflict due to his property being in an acquisition phase. – The Chair noted that this declaration would be formally recorded. – No other conflicts of interest were disclosed.
2.	<p>Actions arising from previous meetings Emily Loudon (EL) provided updates on all prior actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emily reviewed the previous meeting actions and confirmed that all items have been completed. No further questions or issues were raised.
3.	<p>Program update Zeb Dawson (ZD) provided a program update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A program overview was presented, outlining each Inland Rail section, the type of project involved, and the current delivery status. – ZD noted that the southern portion of the map identifies areas where construction is underway or scheduled to begin shortly. – Inland Rail has now secured all environmental approvals for the remaining section in New South Wales. – In Queensland, environmental approvals and land acquisition activities are continuing in line with the Australian Government’s staged delivery approach following the Independent Review of Inland Rail. – Future decisions regarding delivery of the sections north of Narromine remain under consideration by the Australian Government. These decisions are dependent on Inland Rail securing all environmental approvals and completing the required land acquisition. – GC asked whether funding is available to construct the project up to North Star. – RS confirmed that funding is in place for approved works north of Narromine, including obtaining environmental approvals and securing the rail corridor. – Rosalie Millar (RM) requested clarification on the property acquisition activities currently underway. – ZD confirmed that, under the voluntary acquisition process, Inland Rail can progress acquisition where design certainty has been reached and where landowners request acquisition.
4.	<p>Project approvals and next steps Presented by Robert Smith (RS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – RS provided an update on the project approvals process. He noted that Inland Rail is currently preparing final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) responses to the Coordinator-General for all submissions received during public consultation. – RS advised that Inland Rail is also preparing supplementary information to support the Coordinator-General’s assessment.

NO.	COMMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robert Webb (RW) asked when Inland Rail expects to receive final EIS approval. - RS advised that the current target is mid2026; however, the timeframe remains dependent on the Coordinator-General's process. - GC asked about the future of Community Consultative Committees (CCCs). He noted that members are seeking clearer guidance on future engagement structures and the recognition of long-standing community involvement. - RS advised that once primary approvals are granted, existing CCCs are proposed to transition to Community Reference Groups (CRGs). These groups will support engagement through detailed design and construction. - Action: IRPL to provide a formal outline of the proposed CRG structure. - RS explained that project designs will continue to evolve as investigations progress, approvals are refined, and detailed design identifies additional technical requirements. - He confirmed that the approved reference design will form the baseline for assessment. - As detailed design progresses, further refinements or mitigations may lead to changes in the design. - Where refinements are significant, a formal change process may be required. - RS clarified that such refinements are not expected to result in major alignment shifts or route deviations. - IRPL is aiming to secure approval for the revised reference design mid-year. - RM asked about lapse dates and whether they apply to this project. - RS confirmed that lapse dates do apply, and that the period is three years from the date of approval.
5.	<p>Design refinements investigations</p> <p>Presented by Robert Smith (RS) and Andrew Roberts (AR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RS advised that we are investigating design options due to feedback received throughout public consultation as well as an update to the design standards. - AR explained that IR has adopted new rail gradient standard updated from 1:80 to 1:64 generally, with short sections at 1:40, enabling shorter approaches for grade separations and reducing cut/fill impacts without materially worsening transit time. <p>Brookstead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AR presented the revised draft EIS design for Brookstead, where the Gore Highway was proposed as a road-over-rail arrangement with the rail remaining at ground level. - Under the rdEIS design, access to Ware Street would have been removed, and access into Brookstead from Toowoomba would occur via Madeline Street. - Saal Road would have been realigned to connect with the Gore Highway to allow safe left-turn movements. - AR explained that the level-crossing arrangement would require linked activation – boom gates would operate whether trains were using the Brookstead siding (GrainCorp) or the Inland Rail main line. - AR then presented the design option for Brookstead, explaining a rail over road treatment was now preferred and that the entry into Brookstead via the existing Ware Street Highway intersection would no longer operate. - Vehicles will instead enter via Mann Silo Road to Ware Street (under the rail bridge) and connect into Brookstead. - AR confirmed that this will be a large multi-span design that provides sufficient clearance and safe movement for all traffic types. - RS provided a summary of the updated noise modelling. - Application of concept noise barriers along the rail embankment and bridge approach would maintain or improve noise outcomes. - Removal of the level crossing eliminates bell, boom-gate and light activation noise.

NO.	COMMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Closing previously unavoidable gaps in noise barriers (required for road access) improves performance. – At the school and township edge, the rail returns to natural surface level, minimising visual impacts. – A question was raised regarding the required clearance heights for the Gore Highway. – AR advised that it is working closely with TMR and other road managers to ensure the proposed clearances accommodate over height vehicles. It was noted that the Warrego Highway currently has an approved 7metre clearance. Engagement with road managers will continue as design development progresses. – A question was raised regarding whether Ware Street access into Brookstead could be retained. – Inland Rail advised that upgrading the existing Ware Street and Gore Highway intersection would trigger the need for a full intersection upgrade. Under current design standards, this would require the intersections to be staggered, meaning the layout would ultimately look similar to the design option presented. <p>Yelarbon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AR gave an overview of the original Yelarbon arrangement in the revised draft EIS. The original design proposed closing the Cunningham Highway level crossing. It also proposed building a new road over rail bridge northwest of town. – This design extended the Cunningham Highway out of Yelarbon. It included a raised road structure over the rail line and Yelarbon–Kurumbul Road. The road then reconnected to the Cunningham Highway in the north. Several local roads needed realignment to connect to the new structure. – A pedestrian level crossing was planned near the current level crossing. The design also addressed stock route needs on Merton Road to Yelarbon-Keetah. This included a diverted stock movement path. Noise and visual impacts were identified near the GrainCorp silos. Noise walls were proposed in front of the silo art. – AR then presented the updated design. It uses a rail-over-road layout over the Cunningham Highway. This is possible due to new 1:40 gradient allowances. The rail structure is about 200 metres north of the existing rail corridor at its furthest point. The change reduces noise and visual impacts on Yelarbon. The updated design removes the need for a pedestrian level crossing. – The new option includes a multi-span rail bridge. It allows Cunningham Highway traffic to pass underneath. It also maintains GrainCorp's internal truck movements. It improves floodplain flow. – The updated design reduces the amount of local road realignment. It also simplifies stock route connections. Early flood modelling shows improved flood behaviour. More hydrology work is underway. – A question was raised about whether utilities and powerlines fall within Inland Rail's scope. – AR advised that the approach depends on the specific utility that is impacted. Each asset requires a particular treatment, which may involve relocating it, protecting it, placing it underground, or raising it. The treatment varies on a case-by-case basis. <p>Kildonan Road interface upgrade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AR presented the current revised reference design interface arrangement at Kildonan Road, which includes an active level crossing treatment alongside a separate stock route level crossing. – The team is now investigating a rail-over-road option. This option has become more feasible due to the updated rail gradient. – AR also outlined the Eukabilla Lane realignment option. This option involves shifting the rail alignment approximately 60 metres east. The new alignment avoids all impacts to the

NO.	COMMENTS
	<p>existing Eukabilla Lane. This reduces the project footprint by almost half and removes the need for any road works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The revised alignment moves the rail outside the culturally significant Rainbow Reserve. Only minor impacts remain at the Kildonan Road interface. However, the change introduces additional property impacts. <p>Road-rail-interface upgrades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Other key roads examined for refinement include Millmerran–Inglewood Road, Kildonan Road, Thornton Road, Millmerran–Leyburn Road, Linthorpe Road, Owners Scrub Road and Biddeston–Southbrook Road. – The refinements involve changing some locations from rail over road to road over rail. These changes are based on safety considerations and community feedback. – Inland Rail confirmed that in the refined design, no level crossings will remain on state-controlled roads. This will deliver improved safety outcomes. – A question was raised about Oakey Pittsworth Road. – AR advised that the existing intersection will be moved approximately 700 metres up the hill, near Dalman Road. The road will sit in a cutting of around 10 metres, and the bridge at the new intersection will be at ground level. – Three committee members shared positive feedback on the road–rail interface changes. They noted that the Millmerran–Inglewood Road outcome was a very successful result. – RS advised that upcoming design refinement field surveys will support these changes. – A question was raised about the Dingo Fence. – RS confirmed that the fence will be realigned to the rail boundary fence in some locations. – A committee member asked who would be responsible for maintaining the fence. – RS advised that maintenance responsibilities will be discussed in consultation with Local Government. – Action: Maria Oliver requested design maps to display in her shop. – A committee member asked a question about the additional hydrology work undertaken by Inland Rail. – RS confirmed that the current phase of design development includes further hydrology assessment and mitigation work. – RS also noted that, in Pampas, the team is investigating the application of 1:40 rail grades to grade separate Fysh Road. This work includes extending the North Branch bridge by approximately 500 metres to the northeast. – That the current design required local road realignments, including relocating the connection with the Gore Hwy to the west to connect with Harris Rd; and the installation of an active level crossing to maintain vehicle safety – Action: Provide design details for the Pampas (Fysh Road) option to Committee members.
6.	<p>Field surveys and Embankment Trial Presented by Andrew Roberts (AR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AR noted that cultural heritage field surveys are underway with local Aboriginal groups. Cadastral surveys are also continuing to support voluntary land acquisition. – AR provided an overview of the Embankment Trial and explained that it will test the performance of non-conforming materials. The purpose is to assess whether these materials are suitable for reuse in rail embankments. – AR advised that the contract for the trial is close to being awarded in late February. AR also confirmed that the location has been finalised and that construction is expected to begin in Quarter 2 this year. – Environmental assessments for the trial have been completed. EPBC referral documentation is now being finalised.

NO.	COMMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The trial will consist of two adjacent embankments. Each embankment will be 250 metres long, 3 metres high and 21.5 metres wide. - The trial site at Grass Tree Creek was chosen because it is outside the 1% AEP flood zone. It also contains representative Condamine floodplain soils and has minimal environmental impacts. The site includes suitable borrow material for the work. - Monitoring equipment will include moisture probes, settlement devices, weather stations and four survey stations. These will collect daily measurements. - Simulated rainfall will be applied to replicate three years of rainfall within a 12-month period. A dry control embankment, with no artificial wetting, will allow comparison to natural moisture conditions. - Inland Rail noted that the value of the trial lies in understanding soil behaviour, shrink-swell characteristics and construction practicality. - Action: Provide details on the Embankment Trial location and footprint.
7.	<p>Biodiversity offsets update Presented by Robert Smith (RS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RS stated the revised draft EIS includes an Environmental Offset Delivery Strategy identifying offset properties acquired for the project. - RS noted Four properties (Glenlovely, Canning Creek, Hillside and Longsdale) have been secured, with two more still under negotiation. - Baseline ecological surveys have been completed, and all properties are currently managed under interim management plans. - RS stated Offset Area Management Plans (OAMPs) are being drafted and will guide long-term biodiversity management. - Offset site selection has been completed using Inland Rail's assessment tool, and residual impact calculations are being finalised with State and Commonwealth regulators. - A question was raised about the Glenlovely property. - Inland Rail advised that work has been undertaken to secure the offset on the northern portion of the property. The southern half of the property will be leased through a local real estate agent.
8.	<p>General business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A question was raised about waiting areas for vehicles and machinery. The committee asked whether space would be provided for vehicles to safely wait. - AR advised that Inland Rail would be happy to provide this information. - Action: Details of stacking distances on Diekmann Road and Elsdon Road will be discussed with Georgina Krieg. - Karen Oakley from the OCG provided clarification regarding the Bilateral Agreement.
9.	<p>Conclusion and confirmation of actions</p>

Actions

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
1.	IRPL will prepare and provide a formal outline of the proposed CRG.	Inland Rail	27/03/2026
2.	Design plans will be sent to Maria Oliver so she can display them in her shop.	Inland Rail	Completed - 24/02/2026
3.	The Pampas (Fysh Road) design plans will be distributed to the committee members.	Inland Rail	Completed - 24/02/2026
4.	The location of the Embankment Trial will be provided to committee members following the meeting.	Inland Rail	27/03/2026

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DATE REVIEWED 24-FEB-26

Meeting minutes

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
5.	Details of stacking distances on Dieckmann Road and Elsdon Road will be discussed with Georgina Krieg.	Inland Rail	Completed – 23/02/2026

Next meeting

TBC