



29 November 2019

Senator Glenn Sterle  
Chair  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator Sterle

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into the Management of the Inland Rail Project by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) and the Commonwealth Government.

The NFF is the peak national body representing farmers and, more broadly, agriculture across Australia. Operating under a federated structure, individual farmers join their respective state farm organisation and/or national commodity council. These organisations form the NFF. The NFF is committed to advancing Australian agriculture by developing and advocating for policies that support the profitability and productivity of Australian farmers.

The NFF has long supported the construction of an inland rail line that improves agricultural supply chains and brings new economic growth and development opportunities to regions along the route.

We note the Committee seeks input with particular reference to:

- a. financial arrangements of the project;
- b. route planning and selection processes;
- c. connections with other freight infrastructure, including ports and intermodal hubs;
- d. engagement on route alignment, procurement and employment;
- e. urban and regional economic development opportunities;
- f. collaboration between governments;
- g. interaction with National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy; and
- h. any other related matters.

The NFF has not engaged with the ARTC or the Commonwealth Government in the design or implementation of the inland rail project. For this reason, this submission does not address the specific issues raised above. Rather, we support points raised in



the submissions by our members, AgForce and the NSW Farmers Association (NSWF), and that of the Country Women's Association of NSW (CWA NSW).

The NFF has worked with our members, AgForce, NSWF, and the Victorian Farmers Federation, as well as CWA NSW and the Millmerran Rail Group, to ensure the different concerns of impacted landholders are raised at the highest levels and addressed. We note that farmers and communities along different sections of the line face different issues and that management of those issues has varied in terms of resolving concerns.

While the experience of stakeholder engagement has been different in each jurisdiction (AgForce has expressed satisfaction with the current level of consultation in Queensland), where it has been lacking we have supported calls for improved consultation and increased transparency regarding the information used to justify design and implementation decisions. To this end, we have met with the Deputy Prime Minister and other senior members of the Government, to ensure these concerns are seriously considered in implementation of this project and addressed.

The NFF is of the strong view that extensive consultation and engagement with those impacted is critical to the success of inland rail. That consultation should fully consider the impact on farm and rural businesses, families and communities, and take into serious consideration local knowledge of the environment. The inland rail's contribution to strengthening agricultural supply chains on the East Coast and, in turn, improving the competitiveness of our farm businesses, as well as its contribution to economic growth in the regions through which the line passes, should also be priorities for this project.

We welcome this inquiry to the extent that it provides another opportunity for the concerns of impacted stakeholders to be heard. The NFF would encourage the Committee to hold hearings in regions along the route to ensure those impacted have the maximum opportunity to convey their views to Committee members directly.

Please do not hesitate to contact Prudence Gordon, General Manager, Trade and Economics ([pgordon@nff.org.au](mailto:pgordon@nff.org.au) or 0404 670 434) should you have any questions with regard to this submission.

Yours sincerely,

**TONY MAHAR**  
CEO