




The Hon Darren Chester MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Deputy Leader of the House
Member for Gippsland

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Mr John Wagner
Director
Wellcamp Airport
PO Box 151 Drayton North
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350


Dear Mr Wagner

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2017 regarding Inland Rail and its possible alignment past Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport. I regret the delay in responding.

Settling on the alignment for the new sections of track is a complex process. While many communities and businesses in regional Australia, like yours, support Inland Rail and have lobbied for it to run through their region, others have expressed legitimate concerns about the possible impacts of the track passing through their towns and properties.

Nevertheless, I have found through my engagement with local communities that the majority of people want the Inland Rail to be built and put into operation quickly.

As you know, I will soon be making a decision on the preferred Yelarbon to Gowrie alignment corridor to take through to the detailed design phase. I understand the current uncertainty for members of the community along all four alignment options (Base Case Modified, Wellcamp-Charlton, Karara-Leyburn and Warwick) that have been under review in this region, but it has been important to take the time to get it right.

Late last year at my request, independent technical consultants were engaged to conduct a thorough like-for-like review of the four alignment options. The review considered the extent of the civil works, gradients and structures that would be required for the railway. The consultants also carried out field studies and a multi-criteria assessment, which scored each alignment option against the base case. This included an assessment of environmental impacts, community and property impacts, and technical viability as well as many other criteria and sub-criteria.

In conjunction with the technical analysis, I engaged Mr Bruce Wilson AM as the Inland Rail Queensland Community Advisor and Chair of the Yelarbon to Gowrie Project Reference Group (PRG). The PRG met seven times to bring together local knowledge and feedback on significant challenges as part of the alignment review process. Mr Wilson has provided me with his report on the transparency of the review process and his recommendations for continued community engagement.

I acknowledge that the assessment and consultation process has been lengthy. However, it has been important to have the best possible information and advice available to inform my decision.

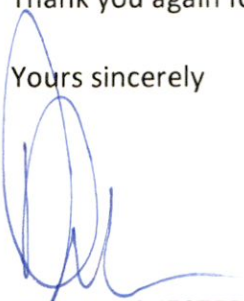
Each alignment under review, including the Wellcamp-Charlton option, has substantial merit with good potential to meet the service offering for Inland Rail; each also has challenges. My decision will seek to balance community, economic and environmental considerations.

Once I have made a decision on which alignment will go to detailed design, further environmental and engineering investigations will be carried out as part of a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Consultation with the broader community, landowners and businesses impacted by the preferred alignment will also commence. In addition, there will be the opportunity to provide formal input to the draft Terms of Reference for this EIS, and at other stages of the approvals process.

Section 22 - Irrelevant material

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely



DARREN CHESTER