CHAPTER 1

Introduction

BORDER TO GOWRIE REVISED DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of chapter

This chapter addresses the 'Introduction' section of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the Inland Rail New South Wales (NSW)/Queensland (QLD) Border to Gowrie Project (B2G) (the Project) and additional requests for information by the Coordinator-General following the public notification of the draft EIS. Appendix A2: Terms of Reference Cross-reference Table provides a summary of relevant ToR items for this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the function of the EIS, explain why it has been prepared and what it sets out to achieve. It also includes an overview of the structure of the revised draft EIS and provides details of the proponent, Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

This chapter provides a summary of the revised reference design and key changes that have been made since the draft EIS. Key features of the Project changes are summarised in Chapter 5: Project Description and shown in Appendix B3: Changes to reference design since draft EIS. Additionally, this chapter identifies the number of public submissions on the draft EIS and the types of submitters.

The revised draft EIS replaces the draft EIS and responds to:

- > Submissions received during public notification of the draft EIS
- The requests for additional information by the Coordinator-General
- Further consultation with stakeholders
- Further field data collected across various disciplines
- Refinements that have been made to the reference design, Project footprint and construction methodologies as part of the EIS process.

1.2 The Inland Rail Program

The Australian Government has committed to delivering the Inland Rail Program, an interstate freight rail corridor between Melbourne and Brisbane, via central-west NSW and Toowoomba in Queensland. Inland Rail will be a significant piece of national transport infrastructure, which will enhance Australia's existing rail network and serve the interstate freight market.

The objectives of the Inland Rail Program, as a whole, are to:

- Provide a rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane (Figure 1-1) that is interoperable with train operations to Perth, Adelaide and other locations on the standard-gauge rail network, and stimulate growth for inter-capital and bulk rail freight
- Deliver an increase in productivity that will benefit consumers through lower freight transport costs
- Provide a step-change improvement in rail service quality in the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor and deliver a freight rail service that is competitive with road
- Improve safety, alleviate congestion and reduce environmental impacts by moving freight from road to rail
- Bypass bottlenecks within the existing metropolitan rail networks and free up train paths for other services along the coastal routes
- Act as an enabler for regional economic developments along the Inland Rail corridor.

The Inland Rail route, which is approximately 1,600 kilometres (km) long, is shown in Figure 1-1 and will involve:

- Using the existing interstate rail corridor through Victoria and southern NSW
- Upgrading approximately 400 km of existing rail corridor, mainly in western NSW
- Providing approximately 600 km of new rail corridor in northern NSW and southeast Queensland.

The Inland Rail Program has been divided into sections to assist with staged delivery.

The justification, service offering and benefits of the Inland Rail Program are discussed in Chapter 2: Project Rationale.

Further information on the Inland Rail Program can be found at inlandrail.com.au.



FIGURE 1-1 MELBOURNE TO BRISBANE INLAND RAIL ROUTE

During the assessment and preparation of the NSW/QLD Border to Gowrie revised draft EIS, Dr Kerry Schott AO was appointed by the Australian Government in October 2022 to undertake an independent review of Inland Rail to consider the scope, schedule and cost of the Inland Rail Program and assesses options for new intermodal terminals in Brisbane and Melbourne, and improved links to the ports in those cities. This independent review (Schott, K., 2023), which included the opportunity for the community and other key stakeholders to make submissions, was completed by Dr Schott AO and provided to the Australian Government in early 2023.

In April 2023, the Australian Government released the findings of the review, which included 19 recommendations to improve the delivery of Inland Rail as well as also confirming that Inland Rail is an important project to meet Australia's growing freight task, improve road safety and to help decarbonise our economy.

At the same time, the Australian Government also released its response to the review, accepting all 19 recommendations made by Dr Schott AO, either in principle or in full.

The recommendations, which are publicly available, included a subsidiary company be established to deliver Inland Rail, a revised program that stages delivery, as well as further assessment of the scope and cost of individual segments of Inland Rail.

On 7 July 2023, the Government announced the establishment of the new Inland Rail Pty Ltd subsidiary, Chair, Board members and interim Statement of Expectations, outlining the objectives and expectations for ARTC and the future delivery of Inland Rail. As a subsidiary of ARTC, Inland Rail Pty Ltd will operate with its own governance and delivery arrangements in line with the review.

Where relevant to the B2G Project, the outcomes of the review were considered when preparing the revised draft EIS. For the purposes of some technical assessments in the revised EIS, assumptions have been made about the timing for Project delivery.

1.3 Proponent

ARTC was created as an Australian Government-owned statutory corporation in 1997 after the Australian Government and State governments agreed to the formation of a single point of contact for all operators seeking to access the national interstate rail network.

Since its formation, ARTC has developed into one of Australia's largest freight rail network owners with more than 20 years' experience in building, maintaining and operating rail infrastructure.

ARTC plays a critical role in the transport supply chain and in the overall economic development of Australia. The ARTC network supports industries and businesses that are vital to the nation's economy by facilitating the movement of a range of products and commodities through NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Across the network, ARTC is responsible for:

- Selling access to train operators
- Developing new business
- Capital investment in the network
- Managing the network
- Infrastructure maintenance.

As the operator and manager of Australia's national rail freight network, ARTC has successfully delivered more than \$9 billion in capital upgrades to the national rail freight network. Having emerged from this period of significant investment and network growth, ARTC has now been tasked with developing a program to deliver Inland Rail on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

ARTC has not been subject to any environmental prosecutions within the last 10 years.

Contact details for the Inland Rail Program are as follows:

Inland Rail
Australian Rail Track Corporation
ABN: 75 081 455 754
Level 16, 180 Ann Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

GPO Box 2462 BRISBANE QLD 4001 Telephone: 1800 732 761

Further information on ARTC can be found at artc.com.au.

1.4 The New South Wales/Queensland Border to Gowrie project

ARTC proposes to construct and operate the NSW/QLD Border to Gowrie section of the Inland Rail Program. The Project is a 217.48 km section of new dedicated single-track, open-access freight railway between the NSW/QLD border and Gowrie, in Queensland. The Project is comprised of 7 km of standard-gauge rail and 210.48 km of dual standard/narrow-gauge rail. The new railway will comprise approximately 149.48 km of new rail corridor (greenfield) and approximately 68.00 km of existing open access rail corridor (brownfield), that forms part of Queensland Rail's South Western Line and Millmerran Branch Line. The Project also includes crossing loops to support 1,800 metre (m) long double-stacked trains.

The Project design responds to key environmental features and has been developed in line with engineering constraints to produce a feasible rail design. The rail design is based on minimising environmental and social impacts, minimising disturbance to existing infrastructure and meeting engineering design criteria.

The estimated capital expenditure for the Project is approximately \$2.2 billion (Chapter 2: Project Rationale and Chapter 18: Economics).

1.4.1 Project objectives

The objectives of the Project are to:

- Provide rail infrastructure that meets Inland Rail Program specifications, to enable trains using the Inland Rail corridor to travel from the NSW/QLD Border to Gowrie, connecting with the North Star to NSW/QLD Border project in the south and the Gowrie to Helidon project in the northeast
- Avoid or minimise the potential for adverse environmental and social impacts.

Further information on the Project is provided in Chapter 5: Project Description.

1.4.2 Location

The Project commences at the NSW/QLD border, approximately 18 km south-east of Goondiwindi. The Project runs north-east via Yelarbon, Inglewood, Millmerran, Pampas, Brookstead, Pittsworth, Southbrook and the Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport to Chainage 208.48 km at Gowrie Junction, north-west of Toowoomba.

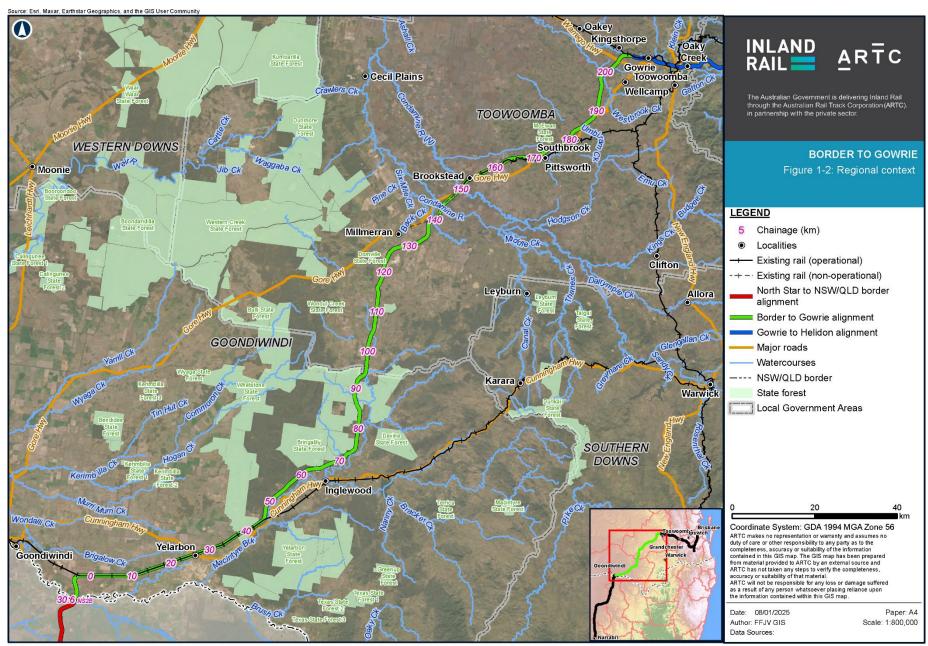
The Project provides a link between the adjacent Inland Rail projects of:

- North Star to NSW/QLD Border to the south at the Macintyre River
- Gowrie to Helidon in the northeast.

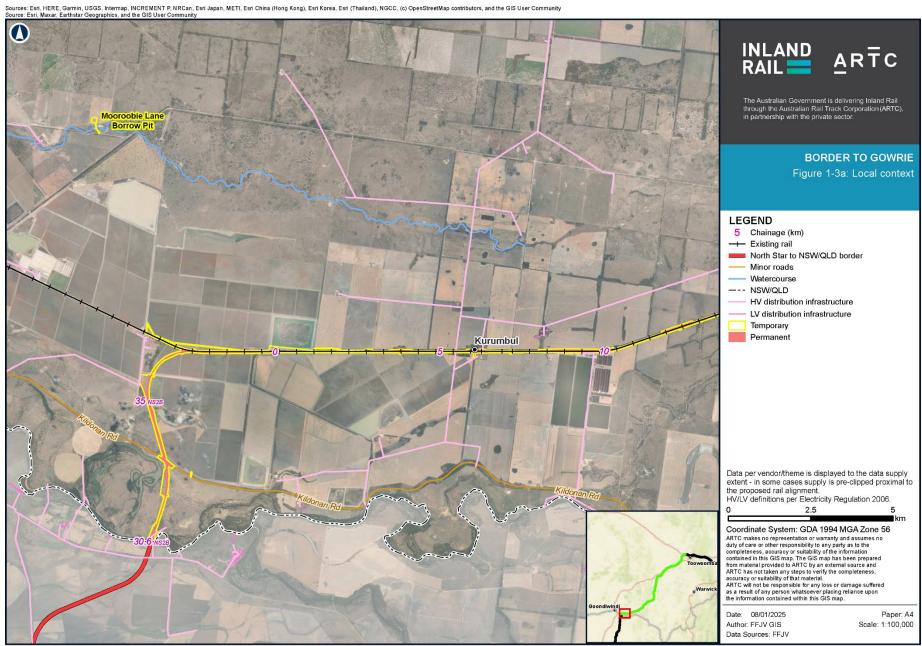
The Project is located within the Goondiwindi Regional and Toowoomba Regional local government areas in the Darling Downs. The location of the Project and its regional context are shown in Figure 1-2. The Project footprint is the area required to accommodate all permanent and temporary components of the Project as shown in Figure 1-3.

The permanent footprint is the area required to accommodate permanent infrastructure associated with the Project, including rail, road and other miscellaneous infrastructure. Rail infrastructure includes rail tracks, crossing loops, turnouts, earthworks, bridges, drainage, level crossings, grade separations, rail maintenance access roads, signalling and fencing. Road-related works resulting from the Project encompass new and upgraded roads, realignments and diversions, intersection improvements and closures.

The temporary footprint is the area required to accommodate construction activities and facilities of a temporary nature and duration to support the Project. The temporary footprint is generally wider than the permanent footprint to allow for the construction of Project elements, including fencing, drainage features including erosion and sediment measures, temporary stockpiling of soil and cleared vegetation, and to allow necessary construction access and turnaround provisions. Temporary Project facilities include laydown areas, site office areas, non-resident workforce accommodation, a material distribution centre, concrete batch plants and borrow pits.



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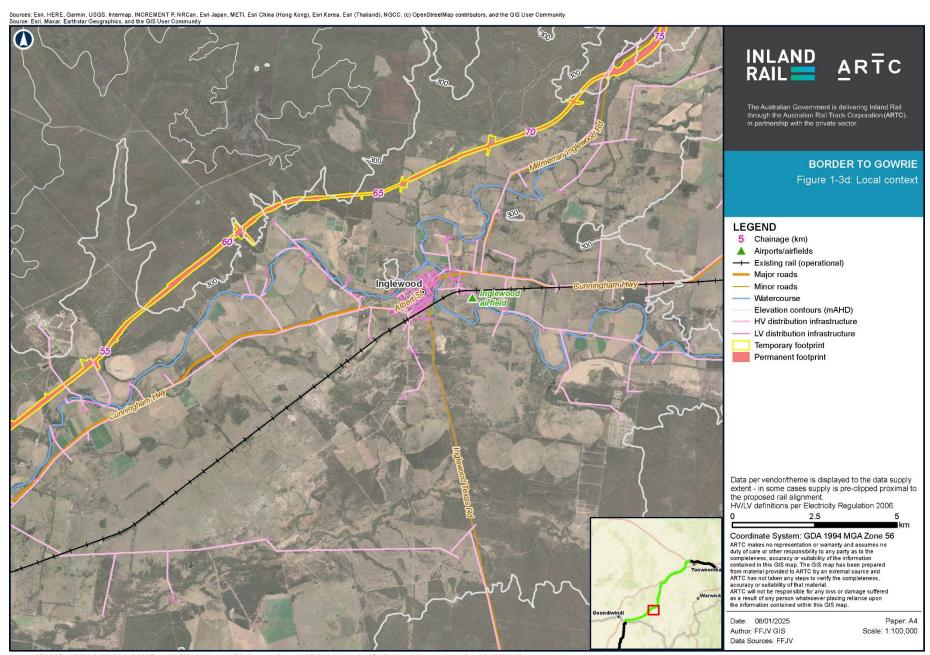


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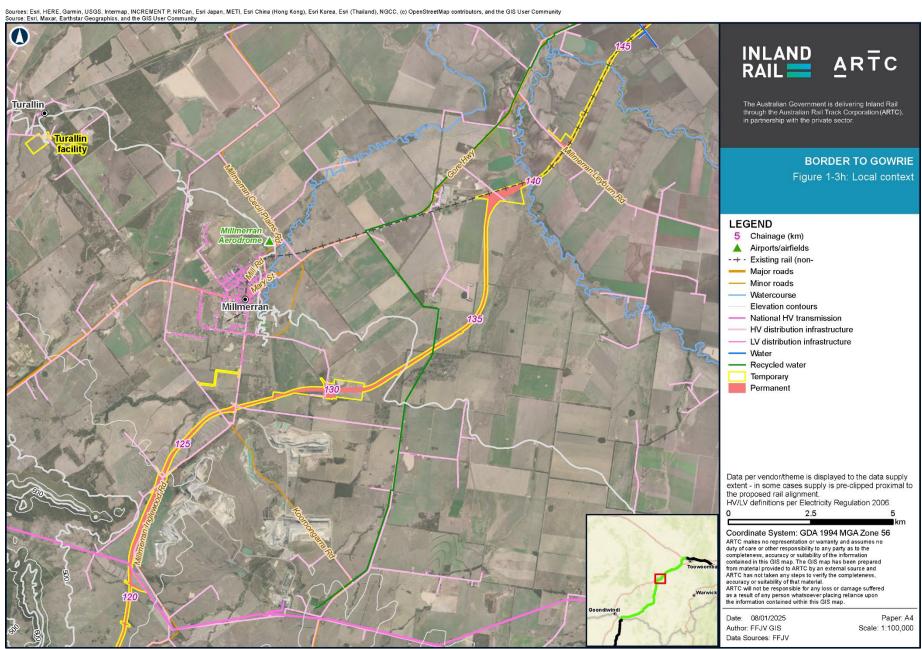
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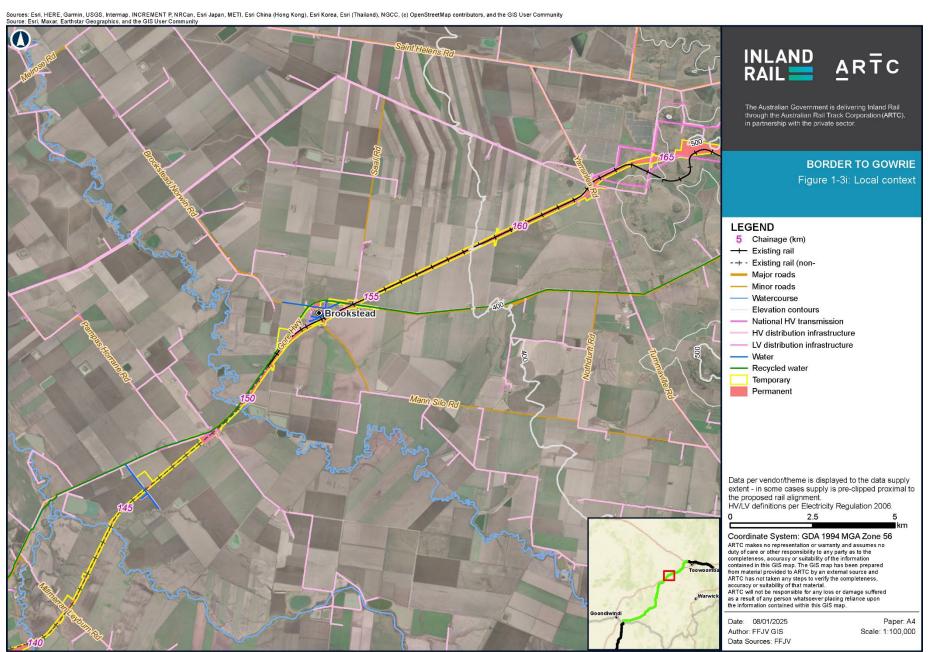
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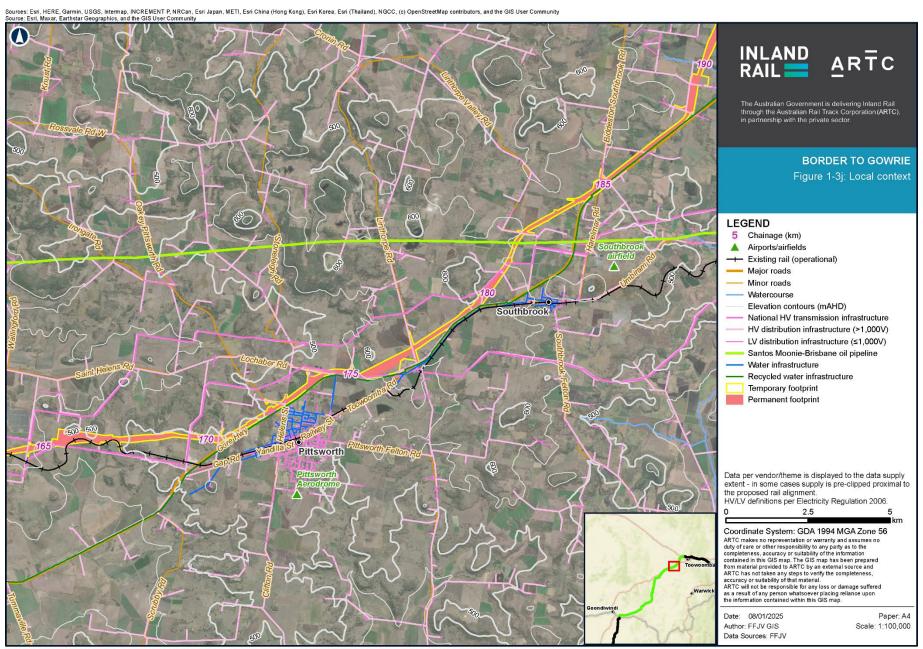
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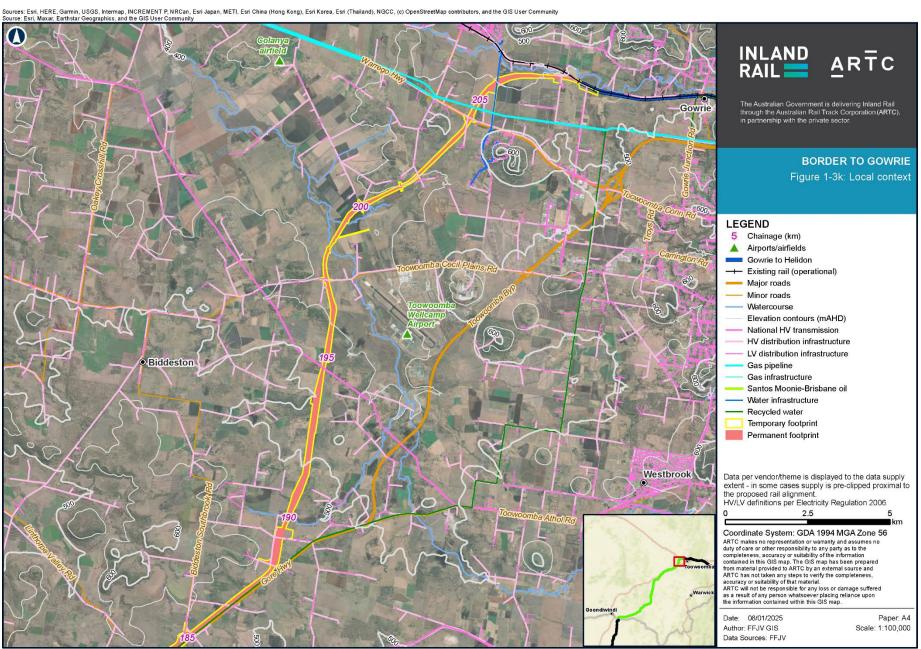
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1.5 The Environmental Impact Statement process

The Project was declared a coordinated project for which an EIS is required by the Coordinator-General on 16 March 2018 under Section 26(1)(a) of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (Qld) (SDPWO Act). This declaration initiates the statutory environmental impact assessment procedure detailed in Part 4 of the SDPWO Act, which requires the proponent to prepare an EIS for the Project in accordance with the ToR.

The benefits of the Project being declared a coordinated project are:

- To provide the public with the opportunity to comment and provide input into the ToR for the EIS and, following its development, on the draft and revised draft EIS
- Requiring the proponent to consult with stakeholders and members of the community who may be impacted by the Project
- To have an independent and transparent social, economic and environmental assessment of the Project undertaken by the Coordinator-General
- To provide for the opportunity of efficient assessment of matters of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) in accordance with the Bilateral Agreement between the Australian Government (the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) and the State of Queensland (the assessment bilateral agreement).

On 9 April 2018, the then Australian Minister for the Environment determined the Project to be a controlled action under the EPBC Act (reference number EPBC 2018/8165). The relevant controlling provision for the Project is listed threatened species and communities (Sections 18 and 18A of the EPBC Act).

The Project will require approval from the Australian Minister for the Environment under Part 9 of the EPBC Act before it can proceed. The SDPWO Act EIS process has been accredited under the bilateral agreement for the assessment of the Project under Section 45 of the EPBC Act. This will allow the EIS to meet both the Queensland and Australian Government legislation impact assessment requirements. Under the assessment bilateral agreement, the EIS must state the controlling provisions for the Project and describe the aspects of the environment that led to the controlled action decision.

A draft ToR was prepared by the Coordinator-General to set out the matters that must be addressed by the EIS, including the EPBC Act requirements. Between 7 May 2018 and 18 June 2018, the draft ToR was made available for public comment under Section 29 of the SDPWO Act.

On 16 November 2018, the Coordinator-General issued the final ToR under Section 30 of the SDPWO Act.

Between 23 January 2021 and 4 May 2021, the draft EIS was made available for public comment under Section 33 of the SDPWO Act, and public and agency submissions were received. By publicly notifying the draft EIS under Section 33, the Coordinator-General had deemed that the draft EIS addressed the ToR to the satisfaction of the Coordinator-General under Section 32. Following completion of the public notification process, the Coordinator-General requested additional information under Section 34B(2) of the SDPWO Act (the revised draft EIS).

This revised draft EIS includes the proponents' responses to the Coordinator-General's additional information requirements and the public submissions.

The following steps in the coordinated Project process remain to be completed:

- Once the Coordinator-General has deemed that the draft EIS additional information requirements have been adequately addressed, the revised draft EIS will be made available for public comment. Submissions can be made to the Coordinator-General to be considered during evaluation of the revised draft EIS
- Following public consultation, the Coordinator-General will assess the revised draft EIS and relevant matters including public submissions, and may accept it as the final EIS
- If accepted as final, the Coordinator-General will evaluate the Project and prepare a report (i.e. Coordinator-General's evaluation report) on the final EIS consistent with the requirements of the SDPWO Act
- If not accepted as final, the Coordinator-General may request additional information and repeat the process until the EIS can be accepted as final
- The Coordinator-General's report will be publicly notified, and a copy provided to the Australian Minister for Environment to enable the decision-making process under Part 9 of the EPBC Act to commence.

Approvals required under State legislation will generally be sought following the publication of the Coordinator-General's evaluation report. For any development approvals required under the *Planning Act 2016* (Qld) the Coordinator-General's report may state that:

- Any development approval given must be subject to stated conditions
- Any development approval given must be only for a stated part of the development
- Any development approval given must be a preliminary approval only.

Alternatively, the Coordinator-General's report may state:

- > That the Coordinator-General has no conditions or requirements for the development
- That a development approval for the development must not be given.

Chapter 3: Legislation and Project Approvals Process summarises the key Commonwealth and State legislation, and local government plans and policies, and in doing so identifies the approvals, permits, licences and authorities required for the detailed design, construction and operations stages of the Project.

1.5.1 Objectives of the Environmental Impact Statement

A principal purpose of this revised draft EIS is to provide sufficient information to enable the Queensland Coordinator-General and Australian Minister for the Environment to evaluate and assess the Project under the SDPWO Act and the EPBC Act, respectively, and for recommendations to be made regarding approvals required by the Project under other legislation. Legislation, policies and guidelines relevant to each environmental aspect are detailed in Chapter 7 to Chapter 22.

To provide sufficient information under the SDPWO Act and the EPBC Act, the objectives of this revised draft EIS are to:

- Address the ToR for the Project
- > Present the revised reference design, including key design changes since the draft EIS
- Provide information to stakeholders and the public on the need for the Project, alternatives to it and proposed construction methods
- Address additional information requests from the Coordinator-General on the draft EIS
- Address the submissions received from stakeholders during public notification of the draft EIS
- Document the potential impacts to the natural, social and economic environment associated with the revised reference design
- Describe the expected benefits and opportunities associated with the Project
- Demonstrate how adverse impacts can be avoided, mitigated and managed, or where offsets for significant residual impacts are required
- Present a Draft Outline Environmental Management Plan to describe environmental management measures for detailed design, construction and operations stages
- Present sufficient information to support post-EIS approvals.

The EIS identifies and describes the environmental values that must be protected as specified in Section 9 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld), the *Environmental Protection Regulation 2019* (Qld), environmental protection policies, water resource plans, State Planning Policy, relevant guidelines and the EPBC Act. The relevant controlling provision for the Project is listed threatened species and communities (Sections 18 and 18A) (reference number EPBC 2018/8165). Refer Appendix O: Matters of National Environmental Significance Technical Report for further detail.

Chapter 3: Legislation and Project Approvals Process tables the potential post-EIS approvals, providing the triggers for each approval, the relevant administering authority, and whether potential exemptions are available to the Project and ARTC. Approval and permit requirements may vary depending on the final design and construction methodology, and future changes in statutory requirements prior to the Project's implementation.

1.5.2 Structure of the Environmental Impact Statement

The revised draft EIS contains the most updated information available to decision makers when considering approvals for the Project. The revised draft EIS is intended to provide the public, Australian, State and local governments, and other stakeholders with sufficient information regarding the type and nature of the Project. This includes detail regarding the potential environmental, social and economic impacts, and the measures proposed by the proponent to avoid or mitigate all adverse impacts on the natural, built and social environment.

All stages of the Project are described in the revised draft EIS including detailed design, Project approvals and corridor acquisition, pre-construction activities and early works, construction works, commissioning, and operations. Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts are identified and assessed with respect to the environmental values of the Project area and its potential area of impact.

The revised draft EIS comprises:

- Chapters describing the EIS process, the Project, identified environmental, social and economic aspects, environmental values, potential impacts and mitigation measures (see Table 1-1 for the revised draft EIS chapter structure). Chapters include amendments in response to:
 - > additional information requests received from the Coordinator-General on the draft EIS
 - public submissions received on the draft EIS
 - updated assessments to address relevant changes in the revised reference design.
- Appendices supporting the chapters, including the responses to draft EIS submissions, management plans and specialist technical reports on identified environmental, social and economic aspects (see Table 1-2 for revised draft EIS appendix structure).

Impact assessment areas have been defined for each of the environmental aspects assessed in Chapter 8 through to Chapter 22 (for example, surface water, flora and fauna and air quality). Impact assessment area descriptions are included in the methodology sections of Chapters 8 to Chapter 22.

The revised draft EIS chapters are outlined in Table 1-1, and the revised draft EIS appendices are set out in Table 1-2.

TABLE 1-1 STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (CHAPTERS)

Chapter	Title
	Executive Summary
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Project Rationale
Chapter 3	Legislation and Project Approvals Process
Chapter 4	Assessment Methodology
Chapter 5	Project Description
Chapter 6	Stakeholder Engagement
Chapter 7	Sustainability
Chapter 8	Land Use and Tenure
Chapter 9	Land Resources
Chapter 10	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Chapter 11	Flora and Fauna
Chapter 12	Air Quality
Chapter 13	Surface Water
Chapter 14	Flooding and Geomorphology
Chapter 15	Groundwater
Chapter 16	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 17	Social
Chapter 18	Economics
Chapter 19	Cultural Heritage
Chapter 20	Traffic, Transport and Access
Chapter 21	Hazard and Risk
Chapter 22	Waste and Resource Management
Chapter 23	Cumulative Impacts
Chapter 24	Draft Outline Environmental Management Plan
Chapter 25	Conclusions
Chapter 26	Abbreviations and Glossary
Chapter 27	References

TABLE 1-2 STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (APPENDICES)

Appendix	Title	
Appendix A1	Response to draft EIS Submissions	
Appendix A2	Appendix A2 Terms of Reference Cross-reference Table	
Appendix B1	Design Drawings	
Appendix B2	Stock Routes	
Appendix B3	Changes to reference design since draft EIS	
Appendix B4	Utilities	
Appendix B5	Construction Water	
Appendix C	Corporate Policies	
Appendix D	Study Team	
Appendix E	Consultation Report	
Appendix F	Impacted Properties	
Appendix G1	Geotechnical Reports-Investigation Results	
Appendix G2	Macquarie Geotechnical-Laboratory Results	
Appendix H	Geomorphology Report	
Appendix I	EMR Search Certificates and Soil Laboratory Certificates	
Appendix J	Soil Assessment Report	
Appendix K	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	
Appendix L	Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology Technical Report	
Appendix M	Draft Koala Management Plan	
Appendix N	Draft Fauna Management Plan	
Appendix O	Matters of National Environmental Significance Technical Report	
Appendix P	Fauna Connectivity Strategy	
Appendix Q	Environmental Offset Delivery Strategy	
Appendix R	Air Quality Technical Report	
Appendix S	Surface Water Quality Technical Report	
Appendix T1	Hydrology and Flooding Technical Report–Volume 1	
Appendix T2	Hydrology and Flooding Technical Report–Volume 2	
Appendix U	Groundwater Technical Report	
Appendix V	Noise and Vibration Assessment–Construction and Road Traffic	
Appendix W	Noise and Vibration Assessment–Railway Operations	
Appendix X	Social Impact Assessment	
Appendix Y	Economic Impact Assessment	
Appendix Z	Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Survey Report	
Appendix AA	Traffic Impact Assessment	
Appendix AB	Earthworks Strategy and Draft Soil Management Plan	
Appendix AC	Proponent Commitments	
Appendix AD	Borrow Pits: Supporting Technical Information	
Appendix AE	Whetstone Material Distribution Centre: Supporting Technical Information	

1.5.3 Submissions on the draft Environmental Impact Statement

A total of 505 submissions were received on the draft EIS regarding the Project, the Project's potential impacts, the technical assessments presented in the draft EIS and the proposed mitigation measures. Table 1-3 summarises the number of submissions received and the origin of the submission.

TABLE 1-3 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION ISSUES RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Submission origin	Number of submissions
Local government	2
State Government	15
Australian Government	1
Non-government organisation/community group	17
Private submitter	470
Total	505

Appendix A1: Response to draft EIS Submissions provides a full list of submitter's comments, any submitter-proposed solutions and, where relevant, the section/s or appendix that comments have been addressed within. Due to privacy legislation the names of individual private submitters have been withheld.

The following process was adopted to categorise the submissions received:

- ▶ Each submission received during the draft EIS public notification period was registered, categorised from where it was received (i.e. submitter type) and a unique identification number applied to every submission
- The matters raised within the submission (including completed proformas) were then identified and a subnumber (i.e. issue number) applied to the submission comment
- Each issue number was assigned to a submission category based on chapters of the draft EIS (e.g. flora and fauna, air quality, land resources), noting instances where cross-discipline input was required.

Summary responses to each submission and, where appropriate, cross-references to the revised draft EIS chapter and/or appendix are provided in Appendix A1: Response to draft EIS Submissions. During development of the revised draft EIS, the reference design has been revised in response to engagement with key stakeholders, assessment of field verified survey data, receipt of submissions from public notification on the draft EIS and additional information requests from the Coordinator-General.

1.5.4 Submissions on the revised draft Environmental Impact Statement

Any person, group or organisation can make a submission about the Project's revised draft EIS to the Coordinator-General during the public notification period. Any submissions that are properly made must be accepted by the Coordinator-General and considered in evaluating the revised draft EIS. Submissions that do not meet the necessary requirements listed under the SDWPO Act may not be accepted by the Coordinator-General.

Under Section 34 of the SDWPO Act a properly made submission must:

- Be made to the Coordinator-General in writing
- Be received on or before the last day of the submission period
- ▶ Be signed by each person who makes the submission
- State the name and address of each person who makes the submission
- > State the grounds of the submission and the facts and circumstances relied on.

A person wishing to make a submission about the EIS should also:

- Clearly state the matter(s) of concern or interest and list points to help with clarity
- Reference the relevant section (s) of the revised draft EIS
- Ensure the submission is legible.

The Coordinator-General may also accept and consider submissions that are not properly made.

Any submissions regarding this EIS should be addressed to:

The Coordinator-General
C/- EIS Project Manager—Inland Rail, Border to Gowrie
Coordinated Project Delivery
Office of the Coordinator-General
Box 15517
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Submissions can be made electronically at the following email address:

inlandrailb2g@coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au

Electronic submissions are required to meet the properly made requirements of the SDPWO Act.

For further enquiries, please contact telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

Properly made submissions on the revised draft EIS are part of the material that must be given consideration in the Coordinator-General's assessment of the Project, including recommendations and conclusions about the potential environmental impacts and mitigation strategies.

Any submitter of a properly made submission in response to the revised draft EIS will have submitter appeal rights in relation to any subsequent 'impact assessable' development application under the *Planning Act 2016* (Qld) if they are required.

Submissions are made as part of a public consultation process and are not confidential. Your submission, including any personal information you provide in connection with your submission, may be disclosed by the Coordinator-General to the Project proponent and to other local, State and Australian government agencies. Your personal information will otherwise be dealt with in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld). The Coordinator-General is authorised under Part 4 of the SDPWO Act to collect personal information as part of the public notification process.

Documents in the possession or under the control of the Coordinator-General are also subject to the *Right to Information Act 2009* (Qld).