



# NARRABRI TO TURRAWAN LINE UPGRADE

SUBMISSIONS REPORT  
MAY 2022

**ARTC**

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**Revision History**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Prepared By</b>	<b>Reviewed By</b>
0.1	5/5/2022	Planning Manager, NSW Projects, MCP	Environment Manager, NSW Projects, MCP
0.2	18/5/2022	Planning Manager, NSW Projects, MCP	Project Environment Adviser, NSW Projects, MCP

## Glossary and Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
ARTC	Australian Rail Track Corporation
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
Detailed design	The concept/reference design is the preliminary design presented in the REF, which would be refined by the Construction Contractor (should the Proposal proceed) to a design suitable for construction (subject to ARTC acceptance)
DPE	NSW Department of Planning and Environment
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
EP&A Regulation	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i>
EPA	The NSW Environment Protection Authority
EPL	Environment Protection License issued for scheduled activities under Schedule 1 of the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>
LGA	Local Government Area
NSW	New South Wales
Proposal	The construction and operation of the Narrabri to Turravan Line Upgrade Project (N2TLU)
REF	Review of Environmental Factors
Sensitive receiver	Land uses and activities that are sensitive to potential noise, vibration, air, and visual impacts, such as residential dwellings, schools, and recreation areas
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
Siding	A rail siding is a portion of a rail line which is separate to the running lines.
TAL	Tonne Axle Load

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited (ARTC) is an Australian Government owned statutory corporation that maintains approximately 8,500 kilometres (km) of rail track across five states. In New South Wales (NSW), ARTC is responsible for the Interstate Network (which includes the Sydney metropolitan freight network), Hunter Valley rail network, and delivery of Inland Rail.

ARTC proposes to upgrade approximately 35 km of track between Narrabri and Turrawan, which has capability limitations related to the existing rail and track geometry. The 'proposal,' known as the Narrabri to Turrawan Line Upgrade (N2TLU Project), will enhance the quality and capability of the 35km connection between the Hunter Valley rail freight network, south of Turrawan, and Inland Rail at Narrabri North, to provide a consistent service offering between north western NSW, Inland Rail and the ports of Newcastle and Sydney.

The proposal will deliver a corridor capable of an enhanced weight rating of 25 TAL at 80 kilometres per hour (km/h), thereby allowing longer and heavier freight trains travelling from north western NSW to access international ports in Newcastle and Sydney.

The proposal aligns with the Australian Government's infrastructure investment goals to maximise the productivity and efficiency of the Australian freight network.

ARTC commissioned Element Environment to undertake a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the N2TLU Project to detail the scope of works and consider the environmental impacts associated with the works, in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation).

## 1.2 Purpose

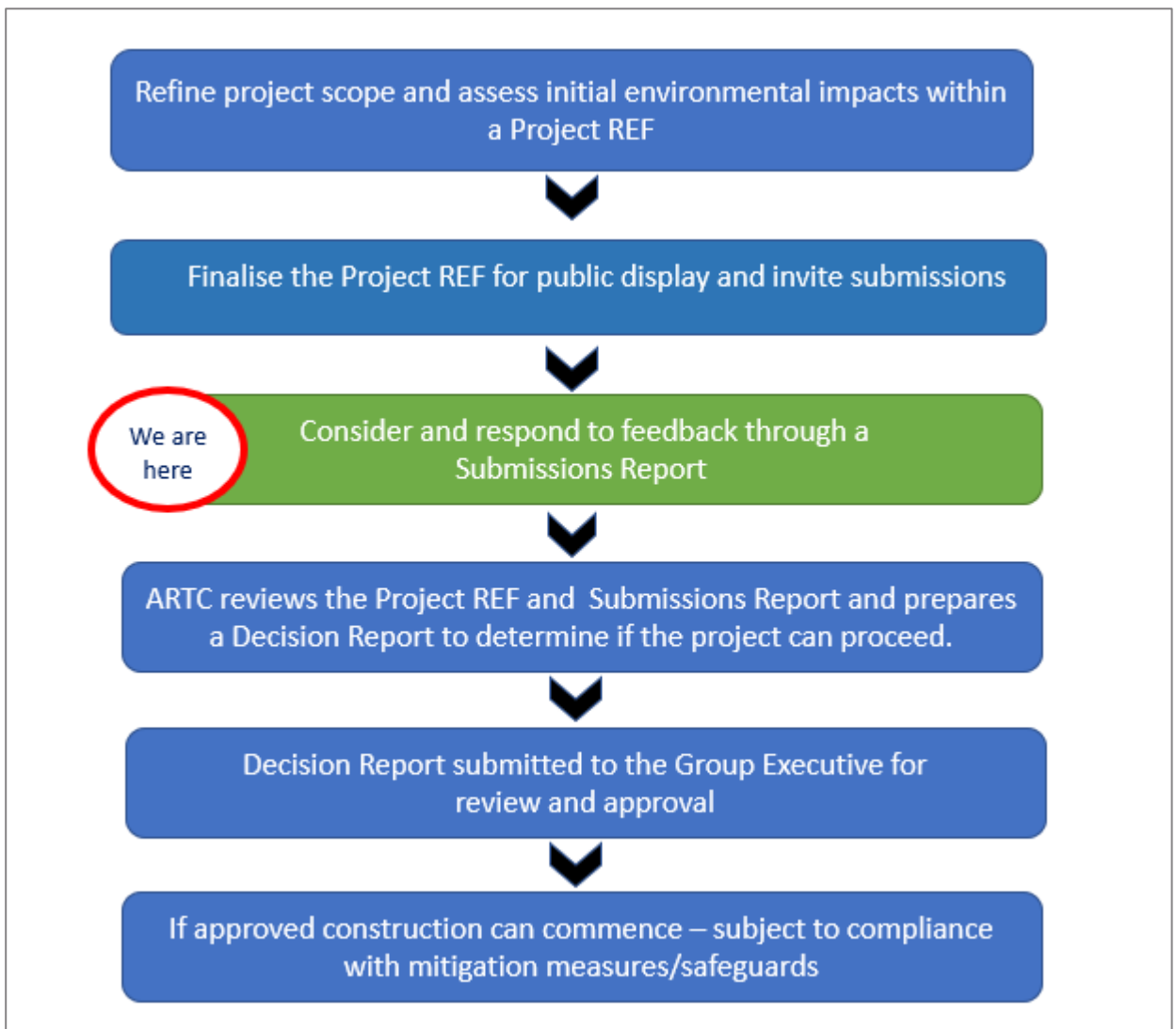
This submissions report has been prepared to document and consider the issues raised in the community and public agency submissions that were received by ARTC during public display of the REF. This submissions report should be read in conjunction with the final REF prepared for the proposal and the updated summary of management measures provided in **Appendix A**.

## 1.3 Assessment and approval process

The Narrabri to Turrawan Line Upgrade REF was prepared by Element Environment on behalf of ARTC in accordance with the ARTC Code of Practice for Environmental Impact Assessment of Development Proposals in NSW (Code of Practice), sections 5.5 and 5.7 of the EP&A Act, and clause 171 of the EP&A Regulation to ensure that ARTC takes into account, to the fullest extent possible, all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment as a result of the proposal.

The REF was placed on public display from 5 April 2022 through to the 26 April 2022 in accordance with the consultation requirements of the Code of Practice.

**Figure 1** provides an overview of the key steps in the assessment and approval process for the project.



**Figure 1:** Overview of ARTC's assessment and approval process

## 2 The Proposal

### 2.1 Location

The proposal is in the Narrabri local government area (LGA) and comprises upgrades to two sections of track on the Main North Line between the Whitehaven Coal junction through to the Narrabri North (**Figure 2**)

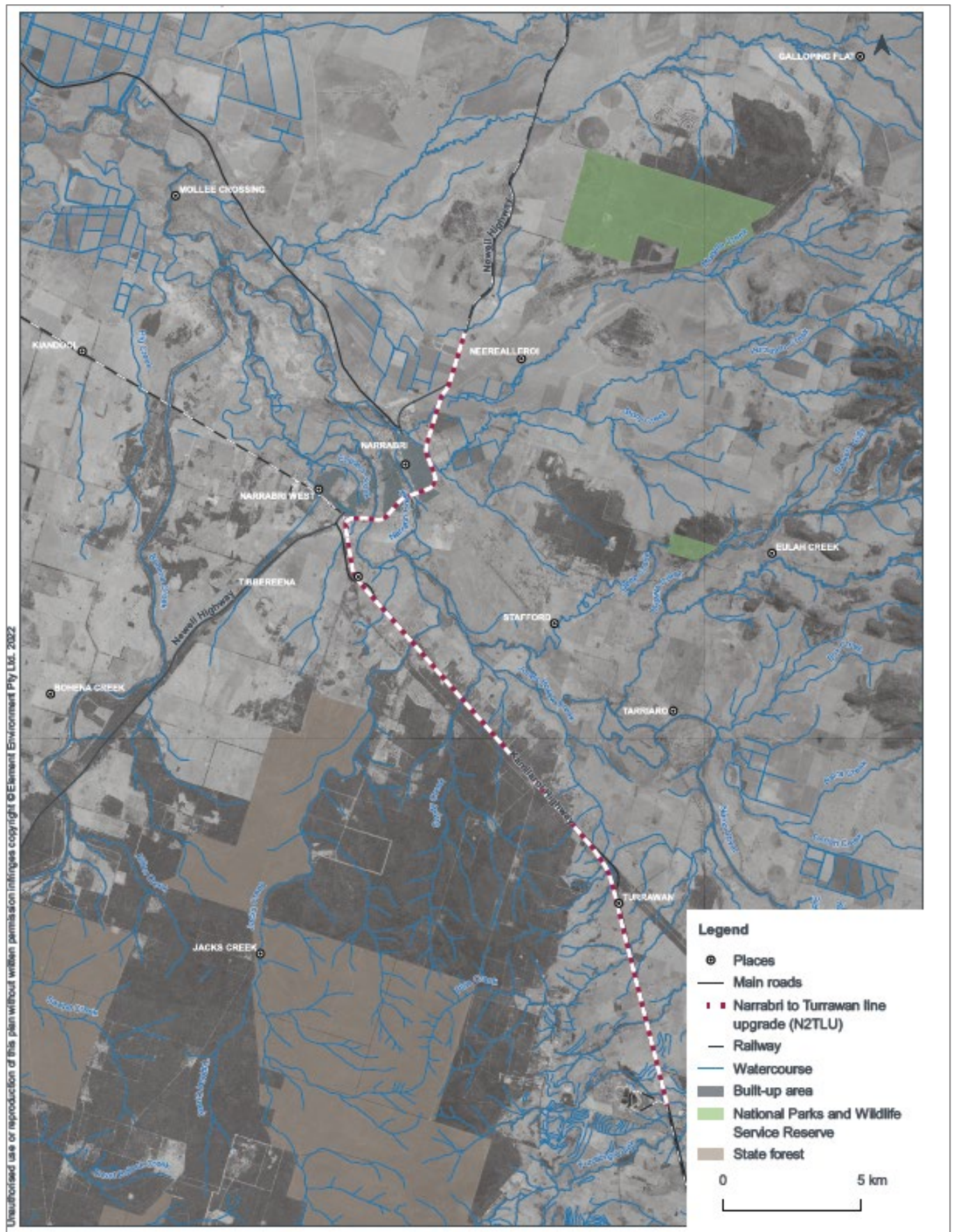
The proposal will generally include:

- replacement of existing steel and timber sleepers with heavy duty concrete sleepers;
- replacement of the existing rail with new 60kg/m rail for 8.1 km between the Whitehaven Coal balloon loop junction (540.38 km) and the northern end of Turrawan passing loop (548.490 km);
- replacement of the existing rail with cascaded 53kg/m rail for 26.7 km in length between the northern end of Turrawan passing loop (548.490 km) and the future Inland Rail interface at Narrabri North (575.00 km);
- lifting of the track in some sections in order to accommodate approximately 100 mm of new ballast below the new concrete sleepers;
- potential sleeper and rail replacement at the Turrawan crossing loop, using recovered steel sleepers, and recovered 53kg rail;

- track formation works at bridge ends, where required;
- partial level crossing upgrades (including new concrete sleepers, steel crossing panels and partial track lift or lifting of level crossing, where feasible); and
- repair of existing culverts along the proposal alignment and replacement of small diameter culverts, where required.

Construction of the project is expected to commence mid-2022 and take around 15 months to complete.





**Figure 2** Location of the N2TLU Project (taken from the REF, ARTC 2022)



## 2.2 Key Benefits

Key benefits of the proposal include:

- improved productivity for freight operators through higher speeds and higher axle loads up to an increase in maximum axle loading to 25 TAL at 80km/h;
- facilitate increased freight volumes (predominantly comprising cotton and grain) to travel from north western NSW through to Newcastle and Sydney ports for export;
- upgrade of the Narrabri to Turrawan Line to 25 TAL at 80km/h, will complete the 'missing link' between the Hunter Valley rail freight network and Inland Rail, thereby enabling a consistent service offering;
- enhanced competitiveness of rail freight;
- enable safety and environmental benefits created by transport mode shifts because of improved rail competitiveness; and
- greater volumes of freight moved on each train, reduced operating costs, reduced transport costs per tonne, greater supply chain efficiency and enhanced competitiveness of Australian exports.

A full overview of the proposal is provided in Chapter 3 of the REF (**Appendix B**).

## 3 Community and Stakeholder Consultation

### 3.1 REF Public Display

The N2TLU REF was placed on public display from Tuesday 5 April 2022 until Tuesday 26 April 2022 on the ARTC N2TLU Project website [www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade](http://www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade).

Community consultation activities included:

- public display of the N2TLU REF at Narrabri Shire Council – Administration Building (46-48 Maitland Street, Narrabri, NSW, 2390), the Narrabri Library (8 Doyle Street, Narrabri NSW 2390) and the Inland Rail Narrabri Office (85 Maitland Street, Narrabri);
- placement of an advertisement in The Courier on 5 April 2022, outlining the scope of the proposal and providing information on where to access the REF and how to make a submission;
- a flyer outlining the scope of the proposal, information on where to view the REF and details on how to make a submission, was sent to 763 residents located within Narrabri and Turrawan adjacent to the rail corridor on 28 March 2022.
- A media release was issued on the 29 March 2022, describing the N2TLU project and outlining that the REF would be placed on public display from 5 April 2022.
- a letter outlining the scope of the proposal and how to seek further information was forwarded to the Narrabri Shire Council, the State Emergency Services (SES) and the Director of the Observatory in accordance with the consultation requirements of Part 2.2, Division 1 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.
- two briefings to Narrabri Shire Council Officers, one during the design phase (November 2021) and another prior to the public consultation period (March 2021).
- a presentation to the Narrabri Business Summit at The Crossing Theatre, Narrabri, on the 31 March 2022, providing an overview of the proposal and information on where to access the REF.
- door knocking to residents located in the Narrabri township directly adjacent to the rail corridor on 30 March 2022; and
- a geotargeted social media post via the ARTC Facebook page reminding the local community of the public display period for the REF and to provide a link to the ARTC Project website to access the REF on 19 April 2022. The ad reached 7618 individuals.

### 3.2 REF Submissions

A total of two (2) submissions was received by ARTC, one from a local community member and one from a local organisation. Neither of the submissions objected to the proposal. Key issues raised in the submissions were:

- concerns on adequate notification and display periods to allow sufficient review and comment; and
- concerns in relation to the use of local quarries and associated impacts.

Issues raised in the submissions are detailed below in Section 3.3.

### 3.3 Consideration and response to submissions

ARTC's response to the submissions received is provided in Table 1.

Submission number	Issue/s raised	ARTC response
1	Insufficient display period for consultation on the proposal.	<p>A display period of 2 weeks (14 days) is typical when displaying a REF for comment and consistent with the ARTC Code of Practice. The consultation period was extended out to 3 weeks (21 days) in this instance to account for the Easter and ANZAC public holidays.</p> <p>The submitter was contacted directly to ensure any comments or concerns could be provided and considered within the display period. No further comments or submissions were received. ARTC will continue to liaise and consult with the community and key stakeholders throughout project development and delivery to ensure comments or concerns can be addressed, wherever possible.</p>
2	Construction traffic, dust, and noise from use of adjacent quarry.	<p>The operation of the quarry referred to is outside ARTC's control and management.</p> <p>The operational use of quarries is generally regulated through an Environmental Protection Licence (EPL) which are managed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA).</p> <p>ARTC will, in all cases, seek to source resources from local operators that are compliant with the relevant environmental regulations under which they operate.</p>

**Table 1: Summary of submissions and ARTC response**

### 3.4 Future consultation

Should ARTC proceed with the proposal, community consultation would continue during further detailed design development, construction stages and during future operation and maintenance activities.

A Narrabri Shire Councillor briefing is currently scheduled for 7 June 2022 to update Council on the Project.

Other consultation tools and activities to be implemented in future stages of the proposal include:

- ARTC will publish this submissions report and the decision report, when completed, via the Project Website at [www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade](http://www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade).
- Affected community and stakeholders will be notified through the use of letters, notifications and/or signage in advance of any upcoming works, including changes to pedestrian and or traffic access arrangements and out of hours construction works.
- Regular project updates will be provided throughout the construction period via the Project Website at [www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade](http://www.artc.com.au/n2tupgrade).
- The Project email address [nswprojects@artc.com.au](mailto:nswprojects@artc.com.au) and phone number (1300 550 402) will continue to be available during the construction phase.

In all instances, ARTC will endeavour to provide timely feedback on any issues or concerns raised by the community.

## 4 Changes to the Proposed Activity & REF following public display

### 4.1 Assessment of design and or construction changes

Detailed design of the project is continuing; however, no design changes have been identified that are substantively different from those described and assessed in the REF.

Further refinement of the design, specifically final track levels north of the Narrabri triangle, will be undertaken to ensure minimal impacts on the movement of flood waters, consistent with the requirements of the mitigation and management measures recommended in the REF (HD1 and HD2 provided in Chapter 7 of the REF).

Along with the refinement of the design, further refinement of the construction methodology has identified alternative options to maintain residential access to properties from Fraser Street, Narrabri, during the Fraser Street level crossing upgrade works. A summary of the proposed alternative access options is outlined below (**Figure 3**) along with a summary of the potential impacts and additional mitigation measures required. A copy of the full environment assessment of the alternate access routes is provided in **Appendix C**.

#### Summary of changes

The REF notes that alternate access may be required to maintain residential access during level crossing works, however, it was generally intended that vehicles would be diverted adjacent to the work site at the Fraser Street level crossing. On further review, it is considered preferable to restrict all vehicle access through the Fraser Street level crossing during the level crossing upgrade works. The restriction will avoid managing vehicular access in close proximity to an active work site and will provide a safe work area for construction personnel during the works. With access restricted along Fraser Street alternate residential access may potentially be provided via a detour along the Newell Highway, Old Turrawan Road and then either through:

- (a) Avon Street; or
- (b) Quinn Avenue.

Both alternate access options require road works (i.e. importation of geofabric, appropriate fill material, formation, compaction and temporary drainage) to facilitate an all-weather temporary vehicular access along existing unformed Council Road reserves and across portions of private land. At this stage it is anticipated that on the completion of the level crossing works, the temporary access road will be removed and the land returned to its original condition, however, the access road may be retained if required and/or in agreement with Council and/or the land owner.





**Figure 3** Indicative location of alternative access options into Fraser Street



## **Additional or altered environmental impacts**

### *Traffic and Access Impacts*

Fraser Street currently provides access for approximately 10 residents and the diversions will be in place for up to seven (7) days. As such neither of the alternate access diversions are considered to result in substantial traffic impacts to the surrounding local roads.

Both alternate access options would result in an equivalent delay (approximately 3-4 minutes) for residential access. Traffic diversions and impacts to residential access will be disrupted for a short duration only. All impacted residents will be consulted and provided with sufficient notification prior to any access diversions being put in place.

### *Biodiversity Impacts*

It is anticipated that minimal vegetation clearance will be required to install the temporary access road for either option. Both access options are located within unformed Council Road reserves and within private property, however the areas appear to have been used for informal access in the past, with past use apparent by the presence of vehicle tracks. The majority of vegetation has been previously cleared, although there is some vegetation located adjacent to the south western end of the Avon Street access option. Both access options are located within an area identified as where the threatened species; the 'Five clawed Worm skink' is known to occur. As these alternate access options were not investigated as part of the ecological assessment provided for the REF, a pre-clearance survey must be undertaken for the Five clawed Worm skink and to ensure there is no significant impacts on other threatened flora and fauna or ecological communities.

### *Consultation*

Further consultation and negotiation with the Narrabri Shire Council and affected landowners, prior to confirming if either of the alternate access options are feasible. Further consultation is also required with the State Emergency Services (SES) consistent with section 2.13 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* prior to any works occurring on the alternate access options.

No additional environmental impacts have been identified as a result of the alternate temporary access options. With the inclusion of the additional pre-clearance survey and consultation requirements, all other impacts identified are able to be appropriately managed through the recommended management and mitigation measures as provided in the REF.

## **4.2 Changes to the REF**

The recommended mitigation and management measures have now been updated to reflect the additional pre-clearance survey and consultation requirements for the alternate temporary access options identified.

Minor corrections and reformatting have also been provided to clarify the mitigation and management measures provided in Chapter 7 of the REF. In addition, management measures have been categorised into a 'specific' or 'standard' mitigation measures to assist with implementation of the management measures should the project proceed.

All amendments to the management measures are highlighted in red and provided in **Appendix A**.

## 5 Conclusion

The REF provided a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposal. The REF concluded that the proposal is considered to have a minimal impact on the surrounding environment and the community, with the implementation of the recommended mitigation and management measures.

All submissions received have been appropriately considered and responded to in section 3.3 of this submissions report, and do not require modification to the project design and or additional mitigation and management measures.

Considering the assessment presented in the REF and the submissions received, the proposal is not likely to significantly affect the environment, critical habitat, threatened species or ecological communities, and as such does not require an Environmental Impact Statement to be prepared under division 5.2 of the EP&A Act. In addition, there are no significant impacts to matters of Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) as such further approvals under the EPBC Act are not required.

On balance, the proposal aligns with the Australian Government's infrastructure investment goals and provides the opportunity to achieve rail infrastructure upgrades that boost national productivity, increase supply chain efficiency, and enhance the competitiveness of Australian exports, while the impacts during construction and operation of the project can be effectively managed through the recommended mitigation measures.

The environmental impact assessment (REF and Submissions Report) is recommended to be approved subject to the mitigation and management measures provided in **Appendix A**.

**Appendix A - Updated Summary of Mitigation and Management Measures**

**Appendix B – Narrabri to Turravan Line Upgrade Project Review of Environmental Factors**

**Appendix C - Environmental Assessment – Alternate temporary access  
N2TLU**