



David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

Warwick Daily News contribution

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Inland Rail: Three options in Maranoa on the table

THE Inland Rail is a nation-building project, snaking its way through eastern Australia from Melbourne to Brisbane and I want to make sure my electorate of Maranoa benefits as much as possible from this key infrastructure project.

There's been some concern in relation to the alignment of the track so I invited the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) and parliamentarians from the local state and federal governments, including the Federal Infrastructure Minister Darren Chester, to come to the table and debate options in the Southern Downs last week.

Last week, a robust and frank conversation took place in Warwick around ARTC's clear failings in conducting an open and transparent consultation process for the Inland Rail project and its failure to fully consider other viable route options.

The Coalition Government has committed to this project because it will unlock agriculture in this country and provide greater returns to farmers looking to access new and different markets, but you don't spend \$894 million on a whim – we're going to get one shot at this and I'm going to make sure we get it right.

I want to clarify that ARTC's Managing Director, Mr Fullerton incorrectly stated the meeting's outcome resulted in a commitment from ARTC that it would assess only two route options, namely the Karara-Leyburn deviation and the current Charlton route.

Simply ARTC got it wrong – they came here in an attempt to provide confidence to us in the process and I am extremely frustrated that Mr Fullerton failed to confirm the clear direction of last week's meeting that ARTC will assess all three options, including a Warwick deviation.

Following ARTC's embarrassing and unprofessional error, I ensured the Minister gave an undertaking to the Mayor of the Southern Downs Regional Council that all three route options would be considered, including a Warwick option which would see the rail track feed into the Wellcamp Airport. In my view, the linking of our existing and new transport industries to export facilities must play a role in assessing a taxpayer spend of this size.

I want to assure the Southern Downs' community that I'll acutely monitor this review process to ensure all options are thoroughly considered and the community gains confidence in ARTC's management which has been shaken by these blunders and we get on with this key nation-building infrastructure project.

I am extremely disappointed in ARTC's lack of professionalism and I will ensure ARTC brief me regularly.

Also I have written to ARTC to re-affirm the outcome of the meeting that three route options will be considered and assessed and all material associated with the review will be made publically available.

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