

This is the story of the Inland Rail and our community.

This is the story of us.

This is the story of the seventy plus year old farmer who has had a stroke from the stress of losing his farm to Inland Rail.

This is the story of the truck driver who has developed his property with hard stand areas, sheds and access roads who has had a nervous breakdown due to losing his property to Inland Rail.

This is the story of the hay producer making hay to help graziers survive the drought who loses his irrigation to Inland Rail.

This is the story of the couple who moved to the area as they needed clean air for the health only to have this threatened by Inland Rail.

This is the story of the farmer who has had his land for five generations whose grandkids will have it taken away from them because of the Inland Rail.

This is the story of the lifestyle farmer with their much-loved cow, horse and chooks whose house is destroyed because of Inland Rail.

This is the story of the farmer whose relative served our country to be given a military funeral and his ashes scattered by plane on the family farm only to be decimated by Inland rail.

This is the story of us.

By way of background, back in 2010 the government decided to investigate the IR option. IR was, of course, found to be not viable, but in need of an announceable the government pressed on and told the consultant to it work. So they asked some freight companies, who thought this IR is nonsense, no one wants freight that does not go door-to-door, we'll tell them that if its Melbourne to Brisbane n 24 hours, and that should be enough to stop it.

So the challenge was set, get this as an announceable before the election.

The consultants said – 24 hours cannot be done.

The government said – OK cut some corners – make the route shorter and get the funding off budget. And hence came the flawed business case of the Inland Rail.

From this very dubious beginning we saw every trick played to make IR stand up. All conversations kept confidential, costings only revealed for non PPP sections, no updated costing provided as things changed, and the biggest secret of all – the actual route.

All this secrecy resulted in the selection of a sub-optimal route. And ultimately for us the choice of a green field route via an airport which will not export any freight transported by inland rail.

Most locally affected people found out there were losing their homes, farms and livelihoods via a letter from ARTC, with some indiscernible maps.

This letter did not provide any acknowledgment of the distress, anxiety and grief that its contents would cause.

ARTC were contacted about their callous and devastating letter and why they did not have at least the intelligence to add the support services of Lifeline or Beyond Blue to their letter.

ARTC responded to say they did not really think it necessary. ARTC continued their lack of care by a follow up with a statement at the recent Pittsworth CCC meeting saying the Inland Rail "may cause a degree of distress".

So as a result of ARTC and their lack of empathy, you can count the effects on our community in the number of people who have medical conditions, anxiety, depression and other mental health issues.

Despite asking ARTC to publicise the support services they should have in place they have taken no action.

Building new infrastructure such as Inland Rail on greenfield sites based on dubious business cases is atrocious.

Asking ARTC with no experience or expertise in building greenfield rail to suddenly build hundreds of KM of tracks is atrocious.

Expecting rural communities to be the collateral damage for an infrastructure which could go on existing is atrocious.

But worst of all destroying rural communities and rural families health is beneath contempt.

Re-route Inland Rail to state owned land, existing easement and existing corridors.

Rural people should not lose their lives for government infrastructure.