

Your ref:

Our ref:



7 June 2024

Dr Kerry Schott AO
Leader, NSW Freight Policy Reform Program
Transport for NSW
Via email to: freight@transport.nsw.gov.au

Dear Dr Schott,

Armidale Regional Council – Freight Policy Reform Submission

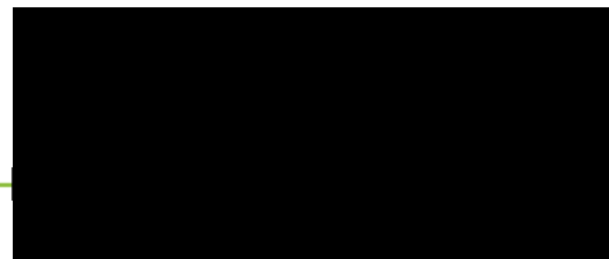
Armidale Regional Council would like to share our perspectives and concerns under the NSW Freight Policy Reform Program.

The Armidale Region is a local government area located in the New England and Northern Tablelands regions of new South Wales. Armidale is a vibrant region with a local economy predominantly driven by agriculture and education with renewable energy solar farms recently providing important new development. Tourism is also a valuable contributor to the region which is known for its National Parks and waterfalls.

Our main freight commodities include livestock and agricultural produce, horticultural produce and harvested forestry timbers. We also manufacture modular homes which are transported across the region via pre-approved transport routes due to oversize and over mass specifications.

We have a number of large-scale projects developing across the region that will need infrastructure development and freight strategies incorporated. These include the development of the New England Renewable Energy Zone, the Airport industrial subdivision and the development of a new Guyra abattoir and industrial zone.

The New England Renewable energy zone has a proposed capacity of 8,000 megawatts of generation in the New England region around Armidale. The development of these projects will require major transport of equipment, materials, and machinery. The locations and proposed access routes have been received and Council have assessed these against our infrastructure. We would expect that a lot of these resources would be imported from overseas and require significant freight route planning and identification. It is estimated that the projects will help the economy by facilitating approximately \$1 billion in infrastructure development, enabling an estimated 2000 construction jobs and 150 ongoing operational jobs as well as supporting local business and contractors via the construction process.



Within the New England Renewable Energy Zone we have the development of the Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project. The project has been deemed as 'Critical State Significant Infrastructure' to meet the energy security needs of NSW and South-East Queensland prior to the phased retirement of coal-fired power stations. The project is located on private land in our local government area.

The current development of a new meatworks processing plant in Guyra will provide toll processing for local premium quality livestock from the region, which is estimated to contain \$1.5 Million head of Angus and Wagyu cattle and some six million sheep. The facility will be located just off the New England highway. The business also aims to develop its own premium New England brand with domestic and export supply chains. There are large numbers of livestock taken out of the region to be processed elsewhere because we do not have the capacity locally. In addition to the multi species abattoir the development company plans to build an industrial subdivision incorporating 31 industrial lots for food and agricultural business.

Other important development in the region includes the 130 lot industrial subdivision alongside the Airport which has been developed for commercial, industrial and aviation related business. The subdivision is located on the New England Highway, midway between Sydney and Brisbane. The efficient freight and distribution of goods in and out of the industrial area is critical for its long-term success and the success of the one of Australia's most vibrant and growing regional airports.

Our Council has several concerns around the proposed locations of REZ development sites and the ability of our bridges and roads to support required freight load capacities and the expected impact on the condition of our infrastructure. The route from Coffs Harbour via Dorrigo on Waterfall Way is also not suitable for freight transport of REZ construction materials and equipment.

Other freight challenges in our region include that railway freight options have been made redundant across the New England region apart from the railway line in from Tamworth with its final stop in Armidale. The Armidale Train station could potentially be developed and upgraded to receive and export freight goods and provide an important link to rail freight routes in the region.

So, it is highly critical that our road network has approved heavy vehicle routes and road capacity to support and facilitate these development projects across the region as well as our current agricultural and horticulture industries.

Improving rail connections in local regional centres would improve freight efficiencies for our local industries and potentially lower business costs of transporting these commodities. It could also lower our road maintenance costs if smaller heavy vehicles are used to transport commodities to regional rail centres.

Of course, we would support the formal recognition of the Port of Newcastle as an important future container terminal especially if it would assist upgrades and improvements to road and rail freight routes from our region to Newcastle or Sydney.

We agree that investing in regional intermodal terminals (IMTs) with enhanced capacity and strategic location planning to integrate and improve road and rail freight types will improve freight options for our regions industries and future projects under the New England Renewable energy zone.

Addressing these infrastructure challenges will not only lower our operational costs but also reduce our environmental footprint by promoting more efficient and sustainable freight transport methods.

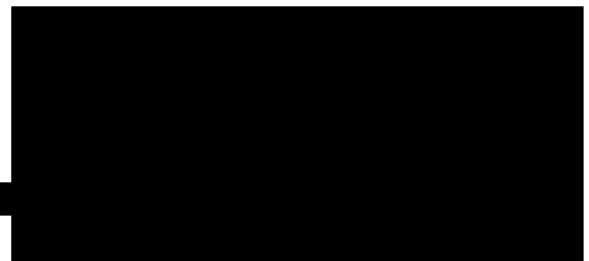
We invite you and the Independent Advisory Panel to visit our region for a roundtable discussion with Council and associated agricultural and allied business communities interested in participating in future dialogue.

Please contact me on (02) 6770 3696 or by email to dboyce@armidale.nsw.gov.au if I can be of further assistance.

Yours Sincerely,



Daniel Boyce
Chief Officer Planning and Activation

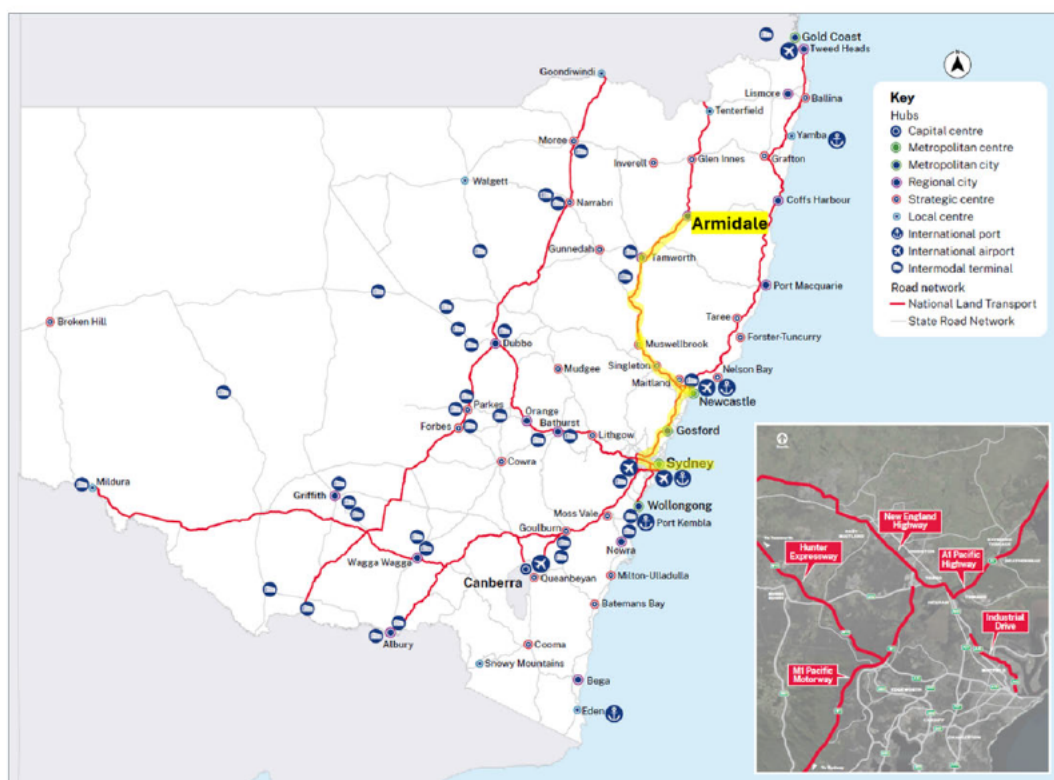


Rail Freight Corridor



Source: Transport for NSW

Road Freight Corridor



Source: Transport for NSW

There are a number of mineral projects I have had close association with in the region that have fallen through the cracks because no rail freight of product was available.

Listed below are the ones that needed rail to initialize development

Guyra Bauxite Deposit

This deposit was discovered in 2010 by Australian Bauxite Ltd (ABX). I was the senior Consultant on this project. 20 to 30 million tonnes of high-grade Gibbsite bauxite was defined in this deposit. The deposit is centered on the old Abattoir and actually sits about 200m east of the buildings and extends east to Falkner Rd and runs under the Highway to the Inverell Rd. This deposit would have been economic to develop if the rail to Armidale and onto Newcastle was opened. We lobbied Macquarie St and other NSW Govt authorities to assess upgrading the line but we were met with complete silence.

The deposit still exists and could be developed quickly by any new operator should the rail link be opened. The resource would probably put around 1 million tonnes to rail per year.

Tingha Bauxite Deposit

This deposit was also discovered by ABX in the same time period as Guyra. This deposit is around 300 million Tonnes and contains high-grade Gibbsite/Maghaemite. The deposit is located around 200m east of Inverell Airport extending east to the Old Mill township then north to Elsmore.

Once again ABX carried out the same lobbying in Macquarie St and received the same response. This project being of an order of magnitude larger would have put ~10 million tonnes per year onto the rail. This project like Guyra is still available for development for any new proponent who wishes to advance.

Ashford Coking Coal Project

This project has around 12 million tonnes of high-grade coking coal and was mined to supply coal to the Ashford Power Station until 1988. I was the Project Manager for this mine and was responsible for operating the Coal Mine for the last 2 years of its life. I have been playing an integral part in having the remaining coal developed since 2005. This mine will go back into production in the next 2 years thanks to the Inland Rail. It would have been developed much sooner if the rail was open to Glen Innes and would have been mined much earlier if the rail line was not closed in the first place.

This project would have supplied ~1 million tonnes of freight to the rail network through Armidale if the Inland Rail had not been developed.

Hillgrove Gold/Antimony Mine

This project has Australia's largest high-grade Antimony deposit. I managed the mine and the geology department during 1999 to 2005. This mine has been through a number of Phoenix like lives during the past 150 years and will rise again as the price of gold and antimony are now at record highs and the supply of high-quality antimony is in short supply. Although not a supplier of ore for shipment to the rail system it would benefit from having consumables and equipment shipped to Armidale by a more affordable and less damaging freight method.

Other projects in development or having benefit of rail network

Taronga Tin Mine at Emmaville

This project is located at Emmaville (40km by road from Glen Innes) in final stages of development and is considered the Worlds Third Largest Hard Rock Tin Deposit. The project has over 100 million tonnes of ore in-situ. I am presently the Senior Consultant Geologist and Exploration Manager. Although not shipping ore to market via rail it would benefit greatly from having consumables and equipment shipped to Glen Innes by rail and I know the Company has investigated this as an alternative to road freight.

Mingoola Limestone

This is large limestone supply operation west of Tenterfield which ships limestone production all through NSW and QLD by road which would benefit from having rail freight from Tenterfield to markets in NSW and potentially QLD.

There are a number of projects being explored from Uralla to Tenterfield and west to Inverell which if developed would benefit from having access to rail freight for ore and consumables if the the rail line was reinvigorated.