

**THE HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, CITIES AND
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SHADOW MINISTER FOR TOURISM**

**JIM CHALMERS MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR FINANCE**

**FEDERAL LABOR WOULD CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO
INLAND RAIL**

A Shorten Labor Government would appoint an eminent Australian to conduct an independent, transparent inquiry into the integrity and efficacy of the route selection process and financing arrangements associated with delivery of the Inland Rail project.

Federal Labor supports Inland Rail.

Indeed, the former Federal Labor Government invested \$900 million to upgrade sections of existing track that will eventually form part of the project and to advance early planning.

However, if public confidence in this multi-billion dollar project is to be maintained we must get the planning and financing arrangements right. Equally, affected communities should be treated with respect and properly consulted.

Route Selection

Unfortunately, communities across Central and North West NSW, as well as those on the southern Darling Downs of Queensland, have become increasingly concerned about the lack of transparency associated with the route selection process endorsed by the Government.

This encompasses the Greenfield sections of Narromine to Narrabri and Yelarbon to Gowrie, as well as around the possible future port connections at each end of the rail line.

The NSW Farmers Association have become so concerned about the process that they have called on their members to cease engagement with the ARTC “so we can finally get the answers we deserve”.

Project Financing

The independent inquiry would also assess the appropriateness of the current financing arrangements, namely the Government’s claim that the project can be fully funded via an “off budget” \$8.4 billion equity injection into the ARTC.

This would include reviewing the decision-making process that led to the 2017 budget decision to finance the project in such a way, including advice to government from the departments of Infrastructure, Finance and Treasury.

Indeed, the 2015 Inland Rail Implementation Group established by the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government and chaired by the Transport Minister in the former Howard government, John Anderson, raised concerns about the project’s commercial viability, going on to state in their report:

“While the economic analysis indicates that Inland Rail will deliver a net economic benefit to Australia, the expected operating revenue over 50 years will not cover the initial capital investment required to build the railway—hence, a substantial public funding contribution is required to deliver Inland Rail.”
Inland Rail Implementation Group: Report to the Australian Government – page xii

The inquiry would take public submissions and hold public meetings in affected communities.

It would have a reporting date of no later than the end of 2019.

The work of the eminent Australian would be supported by Infrastructure Australia and they would have access to the expertise of other departments, including Finance and Treasury.

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**MEDIA CONTACT: MATTHEW FRANKLIN (ALBANESE) 0411 659 868
LABOR CAMPAIGN MEDIA 02 9165 8299**