



The New England Connection

A proposal for renewed regional and long distance rail
 Connecting Parkes to Toowoomba
 via a Reactivated NSW Main North Line

by

TRAINS NORTH INCORPORATED

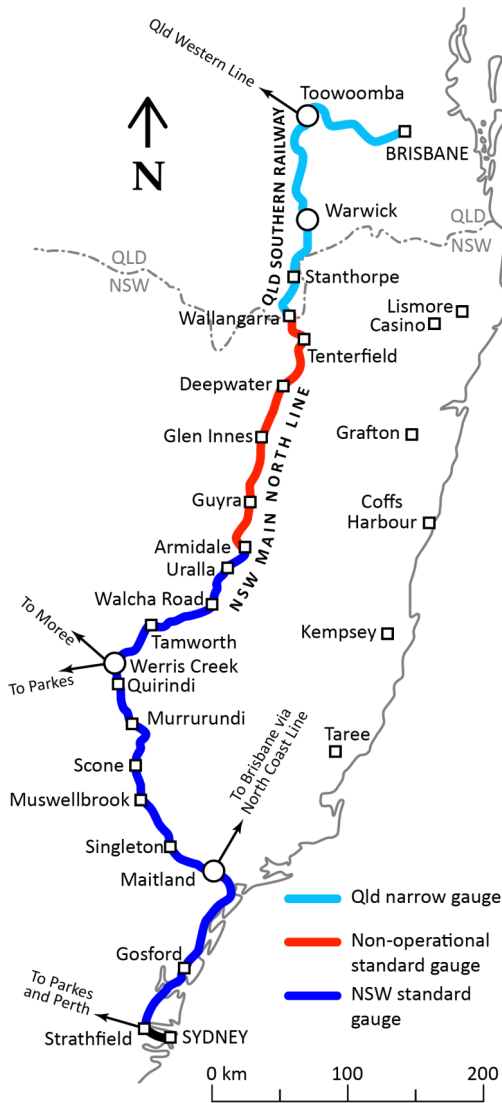
INTRODUCTORY BROCHURE — First Edition — April 2024

The New South Wales Main North Line railway (MNL) occupies a strategic position in Eastern Australia. It was constructed in the 1880s to meet the Queensland Southern Railway at Wallangarra and so to provide the first rail service between Sydney and Brisbane, albeit with the inconvenience of changing trains at the border. It held a monopoly

for that service for more than forty years, until the Grafton Railway Bridge opened in 1932, linking Sydney to Brisbane via the North Coast Line.

The line was vital for national defence during the Second World War but in the post war period it declined in importance until in 1972 trains were curtailed at Tenterfield, ceasing to provide an interstate service ever since. Today 214 kilometres of the Main North Line from Armidale to Wallangarra lie disused (red on the map). Unlike so many other dormant branch lines, however, this railway remains part of a continuous interstate rail corridor linking Tamworth to Toowoomba and extending via existing main lines to Parkes (on the Inland Rail line) and onward to Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney and Melbourne. If there had been uniformity of rail gauge between Queensland and NSW freight and passenger trains would never have ceased to run and this line would today be an active part of Australia's land transport system, as most agree. With the recent stalling of the Inland Rail Project north of Parkes the strategic importance of the MNL has been brought back into focus, as part of the proposed New England Connection, an economical way to complete the Melbourne to Brisbane rail corridor in the short term.

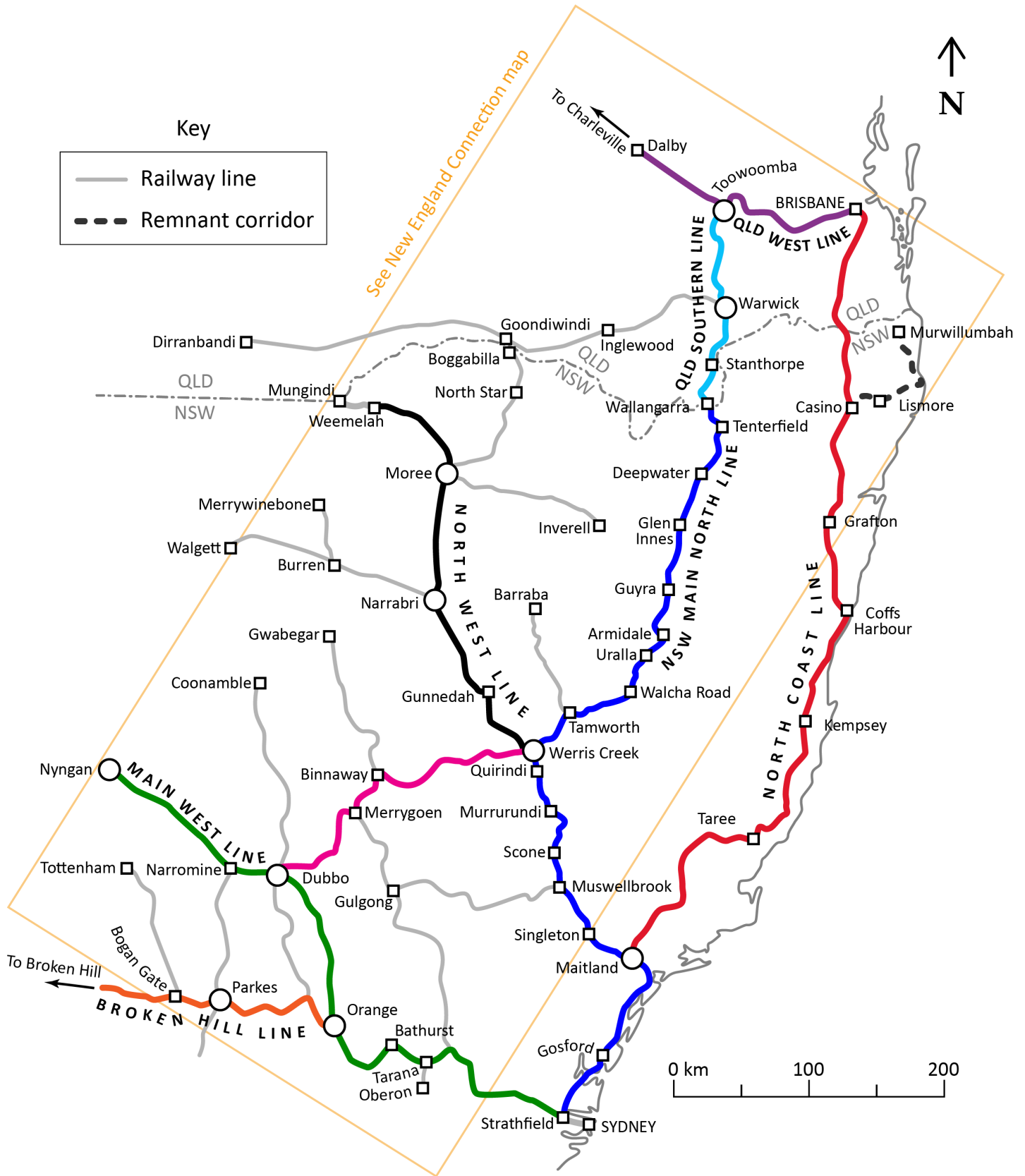
See maps over →



SYDNEY TO BRISBANE VIA THE TABLELANDS

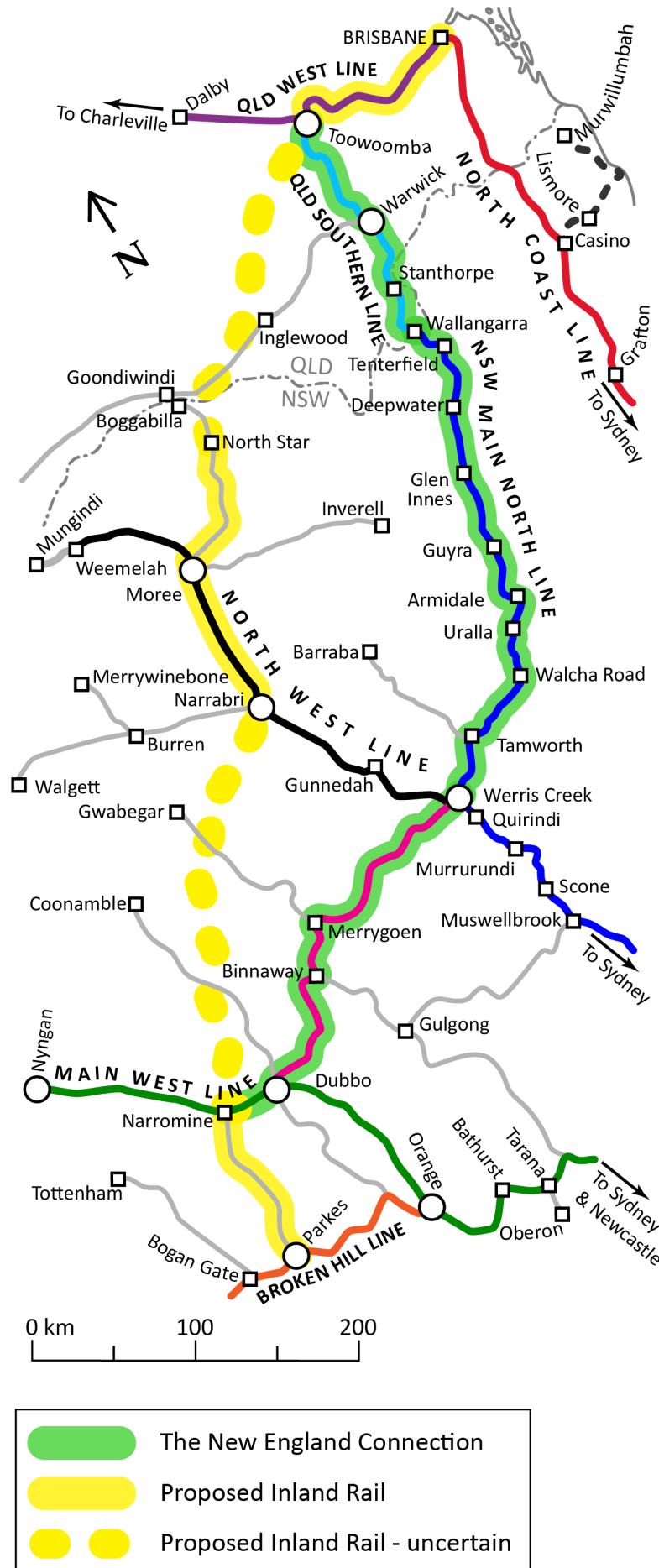
Map by A.V.T for Trains North, 2024

The Main North Line via Glen Innes was included in the *North-South Rail Corridor Study* of 2006 but rejected when a surprisingly low figure was estimated for the construction cost of what is now known as The Inland Rail Project. Now Inland Rail has stalled at Parkes and the Main North Line is ripe for reconsideration.



NORTHERN NSW AND SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND MAIN LINES

Map by A.V.T. for Trains North. 2024



The New England Connection, shown here highlighted in green, is a series of existing railway lines from Narromine to Toowoomba.

It includes active freight-only lines from Narromine to Werris Creek, the line from Werris Creek to Tamworth which now carries regular goods and passenger trains, Tamworth to Armidale carrying only a daily passenger train since 2001, the 214 kilometres of disused Main North Line north of Armidale, and the narrow gauge Queensland Southern Line from Wallangarra to Toowoomba. Combined with the line south of Narromine, already upgraded as part of Inland Rail, the New England Connection can make a continuous link from Parkes to Toowoomba.

The conjunction of problems to be solved and opportunities to be exploited puts the strategic location of the Main North Line in the spotlight. Those problems are principally the urgent need to invest in freight rail infrastructure, expressed by leaders of the transport industry and the CEO of the Australian Logistics Council, together with the stalling of Inland Rail north of Parkes, so that it might not be commenced for many years, if at all.

The dashed yellow lines on the map are the greenfield parts of Inland Rail, long stretches where there are no existing lines, often over floodplains.

The local opportunities involve a huge improvement in connectivity of Tamworth and the Northern Tablelands with Southern Queensland for both passengers and freight, opening the way to social and economic benefits for the region without limit.

THE NEW ENGLAND CONNECTION

Map by A.V.T. for Trains North 2024

ANALYSIS BY SEGMENTS

SEGMENT	CODE	LINE NAME	LENGTH km	CURRENT USE AND CONDITION
1. Narromine to Dubbo	W00	Main West	34.5	Active for freight, grain, cotton, minerals. Timber sleepers extensively replaced with steel.
2. Dubbo to Troy Junction	W61	Dubbo to Coonamble	3.7	Active for freight, grain. 50/50 timber-steel sleepers.
3. Troy Junction to Merrygoen	W60	Troy Junction to Merrygoen	94.2	Active for freight, grain, cotton, minerals. 50/50 timber-steel sleepers, in 2011. Check.
4. Merrygoen to Binnaway	W50	Wallerawang to Gwabegar	41.5	Active for freight, grain. 50/50 timber-steel sleepers, in 2011. Check.
5. Binnaway to Gap Junction	N70	Binnaway to Werris Creek	140.1	Active for freight, grain. Mixed timber-steel sleepers in 2011, but concrete in 2023. Confirm.
6. Gap Junction to Werris Creek	N73	Werris Creek to Mungindi	6.4	Active for passenger and freight: coal, grain, cotton etc.
7. Werris Creek to West Tamworth	N00	Main North	43.7	Active for passenger and for freight. UGL Class 2 track.
8. West Tamworth to Armidale	N00	Main North	124.6	Active for passenger. UGL Class 3 track.
9. Armidale to Deepwater	N00	Main North	139.6	Non-operational, with 47 kg/m rail
10. Deepwater to Wallangarra	N00	Main North	73.8	Non-operational, with lighter duty rails
11. Wallangarra to Warwick		Qld Southern	103	Narrow gauge, active, mainly heritage
12. Warwick to Toowoomba		Qld Southern	94	Narrow gauge, active for freight, mostly grain.
TOTAL LENGTH			899.1	

Trains North's best estimate for the cost of reinstating the disused 214 kilometres from Armidale to Wallangarra to carry heavy freight in single-stack containers is \$1.2 billion, including some realignments at Bolivia Hill and near Glen Innes. Combined with gauge conversion in Queensland and other

required work along the whole line, the preliminary estimate for the whole New England Connection is \$3 billion. This provides a practical solution for Inland Rail. These figures should not be seen as conflicting with lower estimates by others for lighter duty use of the lines. Railway lines are required to be "fit for purpose".

Referenced Documents

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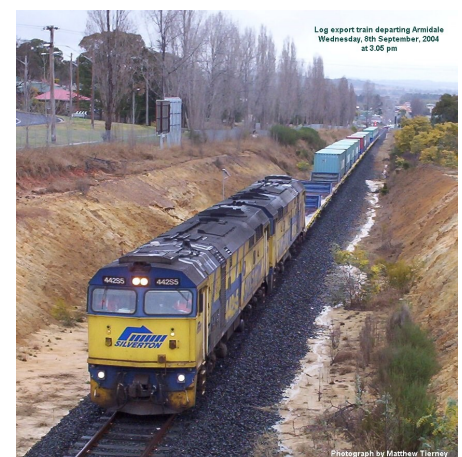
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The last containerised freight train to operate from Armidale, 2004.