

5. Community engagement

5.1 Consultation approach and strategy

ARTC's values commit the organisation to active engagement with stakeholders and the community. A preliminary communications plan has been developed for the project that outlines key stakeholders and the approach for communication, and this has guided the initial engagement for the project.

A project webpage [Project Summary - Ironbark Creek Bridge Replacement](#) has also been established, containing an overview of the project, planning process and community information. Future consultation and planning documents will be published on this webpage.

ARTC recognises that the main concerns for the community and stakeholders will be related to the impacts of the works and access to project related information. As such, the focus of the community engagement will be to provide clear, effective information and to engage stakeholders to identify and respond to concerns, providing feedback where relevant. The consultation approach will:

- Build project awareness, understanding and support among stakeholders and the community by providing detailed information on the proposed works and methodologies. The information is to be accessible and easily understood to those that may potentially be impacted or have interest in the project.
- Proactively communicate with communities and relevant stakeholders by providing a diverse and robust consultation timetable and a variety of communications channels to reach a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for feedback, to ensure stakeholder and community views are effectively recorded and can be considered as the project is developed.

A stakeholder engagement plan will be prepared for the next phases of the project, and this will guide the future consultation activities for the project. ARTC's values will be documented within the plan, committing the organisation to active engagement with stakeholders and the community.

5.2 Consultation undertaken to date

ARTC has undertaken a range of consultation as part of the project to date as detailed in Table 5.1. Responses received to date and key matters raised are also provided in the table.

Table 5.1 Consultation to date

Stakeholder	Engagement activity
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)	Letter issued 19 December 2025, to introduce the project and requesting pre-lodgement meeting to discuss the project. Pre-lodgement meeting held on 28 January 2026 to provide an initial overview of the project and site constraints.
Local Land Services NSW	Letter issued 19 December 2025, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements. Email received 21 January 2026 identifying requirements for land access, and noting the importance of avoiding impacts to the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project and the hydrology and water quality of Ironbark Creek.
Crown Lands and Public Spaces	Letter issued 19 December 2025, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements. Email received 4 February 2026 advising a land access licence was being issued.
Environmental Protection Authority, DCCEE (NSW)	Letter issued 30 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project.

Stakeholder	Engagement activity
Heritage NSW, DCCEEW (NSW)	Letter issued 30 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project.
Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme, DCCEEW (NSW)	Letter issued 30 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project. Email received on 2 February 2026 advising no concerns provided the project doesn't have an adverse effect on flooding. It was also noted that the Hexham Swamp area is a declared floodplain.
National Parks and Wildlife Service, DCCEEW (NSW)	Letter issued 30 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project.
Hunter Line, Transport for NSW	Letter issued 2 February 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project.
Rail Freight Division, Transport for NSW	Letter issued 2 February 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project. Email received 5 February 2026 identifying the potential need for a traffic impact assessment and construction traffic management plan as part of the EIS, and a road occupancy licence for any works on a classified State road.
ARTC Lease Manager, Transport for NSW	Letter issued 4 February 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project and provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project.
City of Newcastle	Email issued 13 February 2026, to introduce the project and advise of community engagement campaign inviting feedback from the community. Letter issued 19 February 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements. Email received on 2 March 2026 providing contact details for land access arrangements and future project correspondence.
The Honourable Jenny Aitchison MP, Minister for Roads and Minister for Regional Transport, NSW	Email issued 13 February 2026, to introduce the project and advise of community engagement campaign inviting feedback from the community.
The Honourable Sharon Claydon MP, Federal Member for Newcastle	Email issued 13 February 2026, to introduce the project and advise of community engagement campaign inviting feedback from the community.
The Honourable Tim Crackanthorp MP, State Member for Newcastle	Email issued 13 February 2026, to introduce the project and advise of community engagement campaign inviting feedback from the community.
NSW TrainLink (Transport for NSW)	Email issued 13 February 2026, to introduce the project and advise of community engagement campaign inviting feedback from the community.
Sierra Sun Pty Ltd	Letter issued 8 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements. Email received on 12 January 2026 providing contact details for land access arrangements and future project correspondence.
Astro Boy Holdings Pty Ltd	Letter issued 9 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements.
RES Pty Ltd	Letter issued 9 January 2026, to introduce the project, to offer an opportunity to meet with ARTC to discuss the project, provide a written submission to ARTC regarding the project and discuss land access arrangements.

Stakeholder	Engagement activity
Wider community	Social media campaign launched on 14 February 2026 to introduce the project, inform key stakeholders and the local community, and gauge early interest, sentiment, and priority concerns. It included a geo-targeted social media post directing users to an online survey. The survey will also be shared on the project webpage. The survey was open until 1 March 2026 however, ARTC will continue to receive community input after this date. To date a total of 18 responses have been received with majority being supportive of the project. Key issues raised included: – Rail travel time impacts during construction – Road traffic and safety impacts during construction – Biodiversity and water impacts – Project benefits – Benefits of the removal of the temporary speed restriction – Construction noise – Loss of historic heritage values associated with the existing bridge

5.3 Consultation to be undertaken during the EIS

ARTC has identified the following stakeholders who will need to be consulted during the EIS process. The type and frequency of consultation will be targeted to each stakeholder group, taking into account level of interest and involvement:

- Government, including City of Newcastle, Crown Lands, Local Land Services, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water DCCEEW (NSW), NSW Environment Protection Authority and DCCEEW (Cth).
- State and Australian government elected representatives.
- Indigenous groups, including Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Freight customers.
- Community/neighbours and businesses, in the areas surrounding the project.
- Environmental stakeholders.
- Landowners – any not identified in the above groups.

To ensure a high level of awareness of the EIS and provide ample opportunities for feedback, ARTC will provide information through a range of channels, including but not limited to:

- Project webpage **Project Summary - Ironbark Creek Bridge Replacement**.
- Briefings with key stakeholders.
- Notifications to community.
- Face-to-face discussions with community members.
- Social media posts targeted to the study area.
- Information to local media.