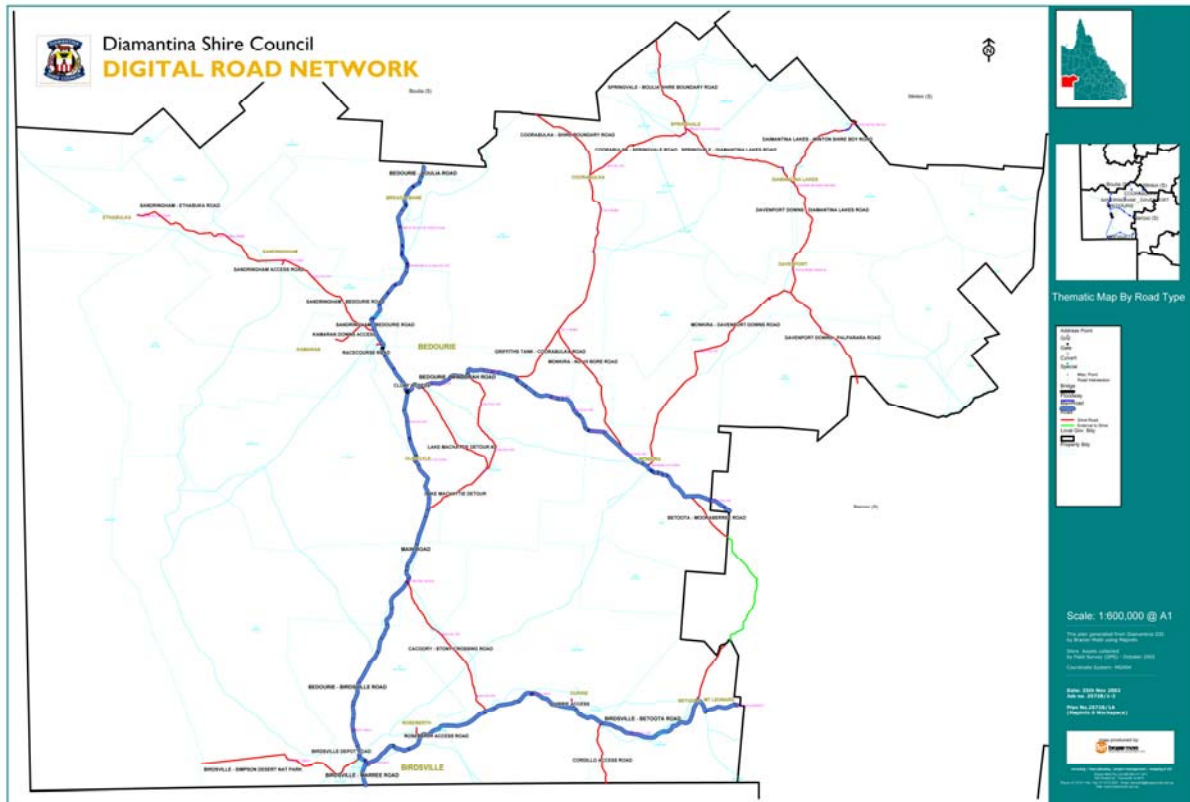


DIAMANTINA SHIRE COUNCIL

Submission to the National Land Freight Strategy

Diamantina Shire Council is located in the far south-west of Queensland, covering some 95,000 km². The two towns of Bedourie and Birdsville are situated in the shire.



Infrastructure Australia

Infrastructure Australia has produced a Discussion Paper about the National Land Freight Strategy, and Diamantina Shire Council wishes to provide comment on the matters raised in the Discussion Paper, and submit an alternative proposal for consideration.

Alternative Proposal

Diamantina Shire Council wishes to put forward an alternative transport route for the movement of freight by road, from Cairns – Townsville to Adelaide, and vice-versa.

The Indicative map of a National Land Freight Network, as produced in the Discussion Paper on page 6, has a glaring weakness in that freight from Cairns – Townsville, in Queensland, to Adelaide, in South Australia, has to either travel the eastern seaboard route, or go via Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory. Both options add several hundred kilometres to the journey.

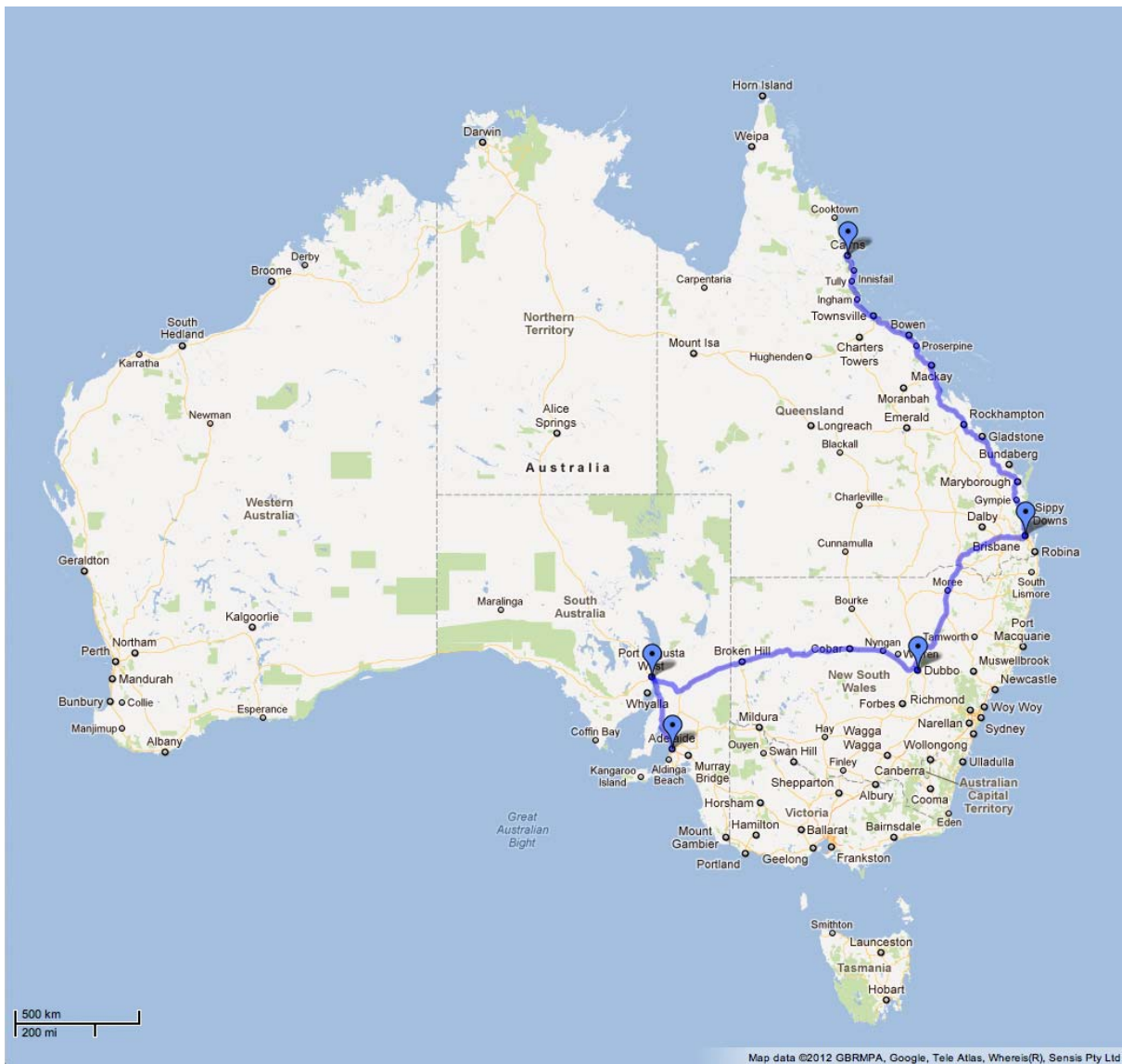
Council is submitting that an alternative route, starting from Hughenden (situated on the Flinders Highway 400 km west of Townsville), through to Winton, Boulia, Bedourie, Birdsville, in Queensland, then on to Marree, Leigh Creek, and Port Augusta in South Australia, be considered.

This alternative route reduces the trip distance by over 1,000 km, as shown below.

Route 1

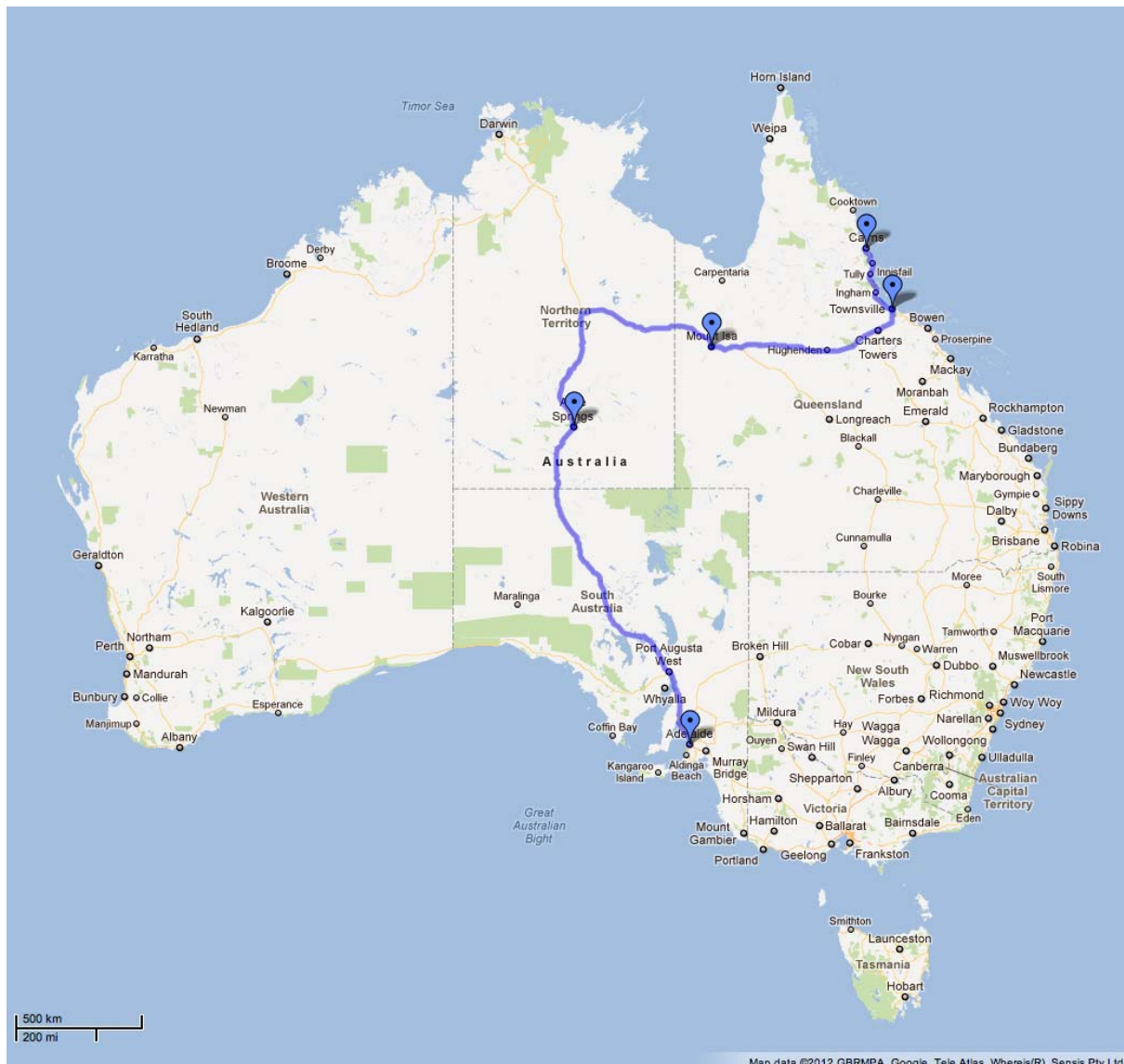
Cairns to Adelaide via eastern seaboard

Cairns – Brisbane	1,703 km
Brisbane – Dubbo	852 km
Dubbo – Port Augusta	1,167 km
Port Augusta – Adelaide	306 km
Total distance	4,028 km



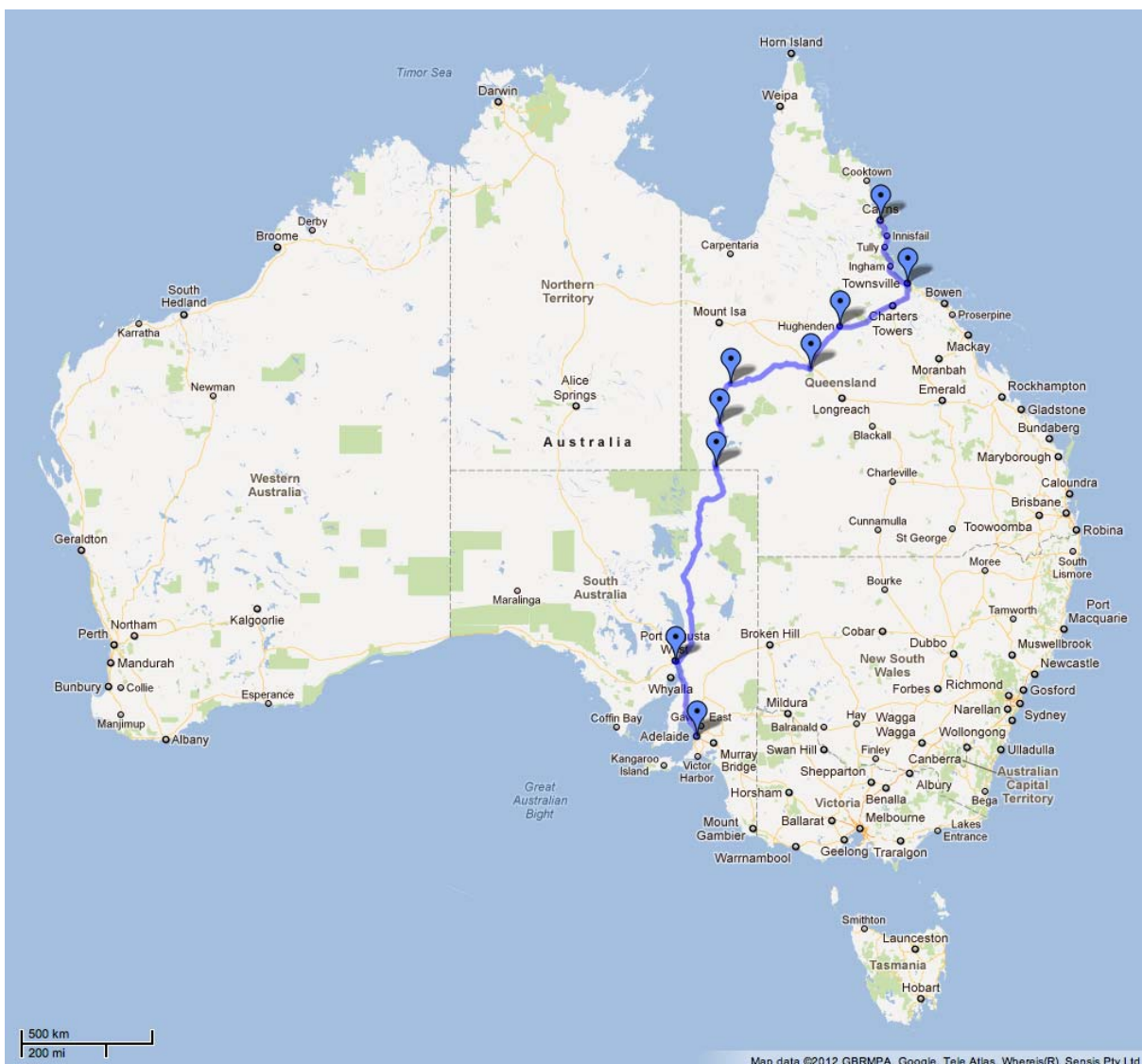
Route 2**Cairns to Adelaide via Northern Territory**

Cairns – Townsville	348 km
Townsville – Mt Isa	904 km
Mt Isa – Alice Springs	1,169 km
Alice Springs – Adelaide	1,531 km
Total distance	3,952 km



Alternative proposal

Cairns – Townsville	348 km
Townsville – Hughenden	384 km
Hughenden – Winton	216 km
Winton – Boulia	362 km
Boulia – Bedourie	195 km
Bedourie – Birdsville	188 km
Birdsville – Port Augusta	898 km
Port Augusta – Adelaide	306 km
Total distance	2,897 km



Physical characteristics of the Alternative Option

This route offers significant benefits in factors such as vehicle payload, speed levels, and gradients.

Vehicle Payload

The route south from Hughenden, to Port Augusta in South Australia, is a designated type 2 Road Train route, thus providing a significant ability for heavy vehicles to move greater tonnages over some 1800 km, or nearly 65% of the already shorter distance.

Speed Levels

A consistent speed level of 100 km/h applies to the full length of the route, outside of the townships.

Gradients

The relative absence of ranges along the route means that truck movements have a journey unhindered by gradients.

In comparison with the eastern seaboard route, the alternative option is far superior in these three critical factors. Against the Northern Territory option, the factors are similar, but the distance saving of over 1000 km weighs heavily in favour of the alternative route.

Other factors for consideration of the Alternative Option

Freight

A critical part of the Australian economy, and to the employment of Australians. Any increase in the efficiency of freight delivery adds to the economy. Shorter distances for road freight means savings in fuel, labour and turnaround times.

Planning

The alternative option is able to be fully planned, due to the lack of large population centres along the route. Land is low cost. There is no urban encroachment. Current land use is conducive to heavy vehicle movement. From Hughenden to Port Augusta there is no community amenity to protect.

Linkages to other transport corridors are available along the route.

There is no road congestion.

The current eastern seaboard route, via the Bruce Highway, is at capacity, and too expensive to flood-proof, making the need for an alternative option paramount.

Rail

There is no competition from Rail. Infrastructure relating to road transport can be built without any need of duplication for rail.

Maintenance

Local Governments along the Queensland section of the route are well placed and capable of delivering road construction and maintenance services.

Climate Change

A projected increase in temperatures means more rainfall, with the eastern seaboard route likely to be most affected by climate change, meaning possible lengthy delays to the movement of freight.

The alternative option offers a redundancy to the freight network of Australia.

Less distance travelled means less greenhouse gas emissions.

The proposed price on carbon will have a significant impact on the longer route options.

In extreme rain events, the Alternative Option offers a minimal risk in comparison with the two other routes.

Defence

The Alternative Option offers a redundancy for Australian Defence in movement of personnel and freight.

Logistics

There would be minimal handling involved with the Alternative Option, and it is free from congestion and bottlenecks.

Design

This alternative offers an opportunity to incorporate the latest design technologies, and to construct a state-of-the-art transport corridor, embracing the latest in engineering and environmental design. This includes facilities and design for high productivity freight vehicles, rest stops, and enhanced safety outcomes for fatigue management.

Regulation

The Alternative Option provides the ability to achieve a nationally consistent regulation for a new transport corridor, as it only involves two states, Queensland, and South Australia.

Produce

The alternative offers increased tourism potential for Outback Australia. Transport of fruit produce from North Queensland to Adelaide is enhanced. Also, the growing mineral provinces of both States are connected.

Access to the southern markets for the cattle producers situated along the transport corridor in the northern part of Australia would be enhanced. At present the properties in Queensland situated below the Flinders Highway (Townsville – Mt Isa) are transported to the southern Queensland markets. The provision of an access corridor to the southern States would enhance the market potential for the cattle, whilst also relieving some of the congestion created by road-train movements in south east Queensland. Safety for road travellers would be increased with the less congestion.

At present the Warrego Highway (Mt Isa – Toowoomba) is in a state of disrepair, and increasing volumes of freight and passenger vehicles are causing more road degradation, resulting in increased freight costs and accident potential.

Safety is paramount on all roads, as statistics show the cost to the provision of health services as a result of accidents is a financial burden on the economy. The figures released on the national road fatalities show Queensland, in the years 2008 and 2009, having an increase in fatalities per 100,000 in population. In 2008 an increase of 11.7% was recorded, and in 2009 an increase of 9.3% was

recorded. The removal of a high percentage of freight from the south-east part of the State would contribute to a reduction in traffic volume and lower accident numbers.