



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION

Truncation of the Newcastle rail line should not proceed on Boxing Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18 December 2014

The parliamentary committee inquiring into the planning process in Newcastle and the broader Hunter region has today tabled an interim report, declaring that the truncation of the Newcastle rail line should not proceed on Boxing Day 2014 as planned.

The Chairman of the committee, the Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC, said: “The committee has issued this early report due to the NSW Government’s decision to truncate the electric railway during the Christmas holidays”.

The interim report examines the proposals to truncate the Newcastle city rail electric line at Wickham and construct light rail to the Newcastle city centre. Revd Nile said: “The decision to truncate the rail line was based upon flawed cost-benefit analysis and we have not seen any other business case to support the truncation. Likewise, the decision to construct the light rail was made without full consideration of alternative options.”

“We are concerned that these two critical decisions appear to have been made without adequate consideration of the community’s concerns.”

Revd Nile continued: “The committee has therefore recommended that no steps be taken to remove any rail infrastructure until there is a peer-reviewed report thoroughly considering the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of alternative options to removing and retaining the existing rail line. Such options could include sinking the rail line, constructing additional overbridges and/or level crossings, landscaping the existing rail corridor and reducing train speeds.”

“We are also perplexed by the government’s decision to truncate the heavy rail line on Boxing Day 2014 given that the construction of the light rail is not expected to commence until late 2015 and there is no defined completion date. If truncation of the rail line does proceed, the NSW Government should postpone the date of truncation at least until construction of the light rail service commences.”

Revd Nile concluded: “We strongly encourage the government to implement our recommendations and restore public confidence in the planning process in Newcastle.”

The committee's final report will be published by 27 February 2015. Further information about the inquiry is also available on the committee's website.

**Revd Nile will hold a press conference at 11.30am today, Thursday 18 October 2014,
in the Media Room at Parliament House.**

Copies of the report can be downloaded from

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/newcastleplanning>

or are available from the Committee Secretariat by calling (02) 9230 3311.

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*For further information please contact Committee Chairman,
Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC, on (02) 9230 3484*