



## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

# **We need to restore public confidence in the planning process in Newcastle**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**3 March 2015**

The parliamentary committee inquiring into the planning process in Newcastle and the broader Hunter region has today tabled its final report. The report contains nine recommendations and two findings addressing key planning decisions for the local area and the role of government agencies in determining those decisions.

The Chairman of the committee, the Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC, said: ‘The final report focuses on a number of planning issues raised by stakeholders throughout the course of the inquiry. For instance, current height controls in Newcastle city’s East End precinct elicited significant concern from inquiry participants. The committee has considered these concerns and recommends that these height limits be substantially reduced.’

‘Conflicts of interest were also explored during the inquiry, including the partnership between UrbanGrowth NSW and The GPT Group. Of particular concern to the committee is the irreconcilable conflict of interest in the relationship between UrbanGrowth NSW and the Department of Planning and Environment, whereby the NSW Government is both the landowner and the planning consent authority. The committee believes this conflict is unacceptable and detracts from public confidence in the planning system, and thus recommends a clear separation between UrbanGrowth NSW and the department to eliminate this direct conflict.’

‘In addition, the committee recommends that the Newcastle City Council be recognised as the principle planning authority for Newcastle over all land in the city, including land currently owned or managed by the Hunter Development Corporation.’

Revd Nile continued: ‘There have been a number of recent developments relating to the NSW Government’s decision to terminate the heavy rail line at Wickham and construct light rail. The most significant of these is the discovery of a leaked Cabinet Minute. The committee is deeply concerned by the alarming contents of this minute, which reveals a less than frank attitude by the government in dealing with this committee.’

‘The committee strongly reiterates our conclusion from our interim report that the cessation of rail services should not have proceeded on Boxing Day 2014, and that the decision to truncate the line was based on flawed analyses. We therefore recommend that the rail services that have

ceased and infrastructure that has been removed from the Newcastle heavy rail be immediately reinstated.'

Revd Nile concluded: 'We want to ensure that the best interests of the community have and will continue to be at the heart of significant planning decisions in Newcastle moving forward. We therefore strongly encourage the government to implement our recommendations and restore public confidence in the planning process in Newcastle.'

**Revd Nile will hold a press conference at 10.15 am today, Tuesday 3 March 2015,  
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*