

University of Newcastle

NSW Parliament Inquiry on the planning process in Newcastle and the broader Hunter region

Responses to questions taken on notice during the appearance of University representatives, Mr Nat McGregor, Chief Operating Officer, and Mr Alan Tracey, Director Infrastructure and Facilities Services, before the Select Committee on Friday 21 November 2014.

1 ‘How many students do you project will come to the Newcastle campus from outside the immediate central business district [CBD] area of the 4,300? Do you have a projection?’

The analysis conducted by transport consultants engaged by the University of Newcastle (UON) indicates that approximately 1,488 student users of NeW Space will travel to the NeW Space campus from outside the city’s central business district area.

The University wishes to emphasise that the NeW Space campus’ peak occupancy will be 2,181 reflecting the timetable-based use of the building by students attending for classes.

2 ‘When was the final decision made, the press go, if you like, for the city campus?’

The announcement that the University had secured \$30 million through the Federal government’s Education Investment Fund on 13 April 2013 enabled the University to formalise its intention to proceed with the NeW Space project and effectively “press go” on the next steps in the project plan.

3 ‘Has it ever been explained to you how the cost-benefit analysis, which was done by consultants for the Hunter Development Corporation [HDC], said that your relocation was contingent upon the railway line? Do you know how that came to be? Did they ever ask the university about this, that you know of?’

The University understands that the report referred to was ‘Newcastle CBD Strategy – Rail Proposal Cost Benefit Assessment’ prepared for the Hunter Development Corporation in May 2009. The University has reviewed records and is unable to locate any information that indicates that UON considered the expanded presence of the University in the city was directly contingent upon the future of the existing heavy rail line.

4 ‘You have done your traffic studies and your passenger studies about the number of students and staff that will come by way of public transport. Does that vary dependent upon whether or not the railway line is cut?’

The transport analysis commissioned by the University relied upon the base assumption that public transport modes would be available for use by UON students and staff. The University has not modelled public transport usage under different scenarios for the future of the existing heavy rail line. UON’s analysis was based on the NSW Government’s timetable, current at the time of the analysis, which indicated the Wickham interchange would be open in 2016 and light rail operational by 2019.

5 'How many people in total are employed by the university? Do you have that?'

Across the University we employ over 5,400 people. The University's Annual Report 2013, published in 2014, stated that the University's workforce comprised 2,670 full time equivalent staff in ongoing or fixed term employment.