



Premier of New South Wales  
Minister for Western Sydney  
Minister for Infrastructure

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile MLC  
Committee Chairman  
Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Rev. Nile,

Fred

Thank you for your letter of 13 November 2014 on behalf of the Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region.

I note that you seek advice regarding whether there is urgency for truncating the rail line on Boxing Day; and what the cost would be of delaying the truncation of the rail line until after this committee reports in February 2015.

As you know, the NSW Government made the decision to remove the heavy rail between Wickham and Newcastle in the release of the *Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy* in December 2012 and allocated \$120 million towards this task.

Following this decision, the NSW Government in the 2013-14 Budget announced the long-term lease of the Port of Newcastle, with an additional \$340 million of the proceeds going towards the revitalisation of Newcastle.

The plans we have announced will include the removal of the railway line between Wickham and Newcastle in order to renew the city centre, and the introduction of modern light rail linking the beach. This will not only unlock Newcastle's potential, but also help bring jobs, residents and visitors into the city centre.

Extensive community consultation has been undertaken by UrbanGrowth NSW and Transport for NSW.

As announced in July 2014, trains will stop operating beyond Wickham from 26 December 2014 to allow work to commence.

A significant amount of planning and preparation has been undertaken to ensure the truncation can start on this date with minimal disturbance.

I am advised this includes the following measures:

- Finalising the detailed and complex train timetabling and scheduling;
- Agreed to the rail line possession rescheduling;
- Preparing the relocation of rail staff;
- Signed bus contracts;
- Tenders have been called for the design & construction of the Wickham Transport Interchange;
- Informing customers via a communications campaign; and
- Early works are currently underway to prepare for the truncation, including a contractor engaged and handling of goods.

Historically, passenger numbers are at their lowest in late December and early January with many regular commuters such as workers and school and university students on annual leave meaning impacts of completing this work on customers are lessened.

I am further advised the delay of the truncation beyond 26 December 2014 is estimated to cost a minimum of \$220,000 per week.

In light of these matters, the NSW Government will keep to its announced schedule.

Most importantly we are committed to getting on with the job.

Newcastle has been paralysed by a lack of action and indecision by the former Labor Government – we will not make the same mistake.

Please contact my office if you require any further information.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely



**Mike Baird MP**  
Premier