

**Submission
No 198**

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE
AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

Name: Ms Bobbie Antonic

Date received: 23/10/2014

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Ms Bobbie Antonic

Terms of Reference –

2. The committee is to consider the role of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure,

Newcastle City Council, Urban Growth NSW, Lake Macquarie Council, and the Hunter

Development Corporation in the consideration and assessment of:

(a) State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Amendment (Newcastle City Centre)

2014

(b) the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

(e) the decision to terminate the Newcastle rail line at Wickham and any proposal to construct light rail including along Hunter and Scott street

*On February 28th, 2014 –a friend contacted me to tell me to check the UON Facebook page. A focus group was advertised on the page. It said, "Join a focus group to give your view on the potential light rail route between Wickham and Newcastle, Mon – Wed at Novatel 6pm- 7.30pm." I contacted the company via phone and said i was interested. I think I received an email to say i was accepted. Monday 3rd March 2014, there was 9 participants (one was an ex NCC town planner who was canvas called to attend as he said he lives in Cooks Hill). The focus group was run by Enigma, I asked the lady at the start as I was early and interested to hear where she was from. Her name was Kim. The town planner fellow started off liking the Hunter St option, midway through the night he changed his mind and liked the existing line. Then he ended up liking a hybrid – on existing line and

Darby Street. A university student liked the Hunter St mall optioned and then changed her mind to existing line. I mentioned I didn't like any of the options but the existing line option made more sense but from Newcastle Station through to the wharf rd and esplanade, loop back to Newcastle station. The consensus was we all liked the existing line option. Kim was surprised at our responses and in my view was trying to steer us to the Hunter St option. A friend's daughter went the next night Tuesday 4th all participants wanted to keep the rail in the corridor although they were told to write down the advantages of running in Hunter St.

Community Consultation? – As a business owner in Watt Street at the time, small businesses were not invited to a business forum re – light rail. On February Wednesday 26th, listening to 1233ABC radio on Paul Bevan's drive show it mentioned an invite only business forum on Friday. I didn't know about it and was angry, as 18 years in business. I texted the radio station to tell them about my dismay.

February Thursday 27th, I walked to other small businesses and asked if they knew about an invite only business forum regarding the light rail. They all said no but said a lady frantically handed these businesses an information letter that had RSVP 25th Tuesday, February. I called Urban Growth i think and invited myself. There were 21 people at the tables and 6 were small business owners. To me it felt stacked. No cost of construction given, no impact on businesses in construction phase, it seemed they were pushing the 3rd option which was Hunter street option and Urban Growth described the light rail on corridor as challenging.

*On February 25th – Councillor Nuatali Nelmes tweeted – Debate gagged at council while Mayor shoves through a motion on Port sale, removal of rail line and endorsement of building heights.

*The truncation of the rail has concerned me a lot. A business owner in Newcastle the truncation of rail will affect businesses in a bad way. Customers come from far and wide and a lot of our customers come from Maitland and surrounds. The construction phase of Hunter St option for light

rail will certainly kill businesses. My concerns are regards to community consultation that it seems, the government had decided already and the consultations were fluff. Has the NSW Government made promises to big businesses/real estate agents?