

**Submission
No 7**

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

Name: Mr Leon Oberg

Date received: 28/09/2014

Re Newcastle railway

‘Newcastle is a city for God's sake, not a terminus for some remote rural branchline’.

Despite the continuing parade of politicians and developers passing through the ICAC, no one in Government seems to get it. The axing of that rail link is on the nose. Newcastle is a city for God's sake, not a terminus for some remote rural branchline.

We have seen all too often in many other areas of development, windfarms to coal seam gas, mining to some building developments, how those who make often flawed decisions are long gone from public life leaving people living with the consequences to pick up the pieces for decades afterwards.

One could suggest that if the land occupied by the Newcastle heavy rail corridor is so valuable to developers due to the absence of undermining by old coal workings, surely the State (ie: taxpayers) could benefit by simply leasing the strip's air rights.

Genuine developers could go their hardest creating their ‘showpieces’ in the knowledge that what ever they intended creating for their future tenants would seamlessly bring people to them from far and wide. And they would be able to disembark at existing stations directly underneath, or near their respective initiatives rather than transfer to a toy, slower system of travel.

As we read in the Sydney press last year, there are commendable plans to provide air rights above Sydney railway yard stretching three kilometers across 10 sets of busy rail tracks, all the way to Redfern and beyond.

Such a scheme in Newcastle would beautify what is admittedly an ugly rail corridor, but one which would maintain the status quo in respect to seamless, comfortable transport right into the city.

Light rail initiatives in Newcastle would be better served bringing people to the city from areas not already served by heavy rail.

I am adamant the following points should also be considered before this valuable railway link is vandalised by this flawed judgment.

- Anti Discrimination Act as changing transport modes makes travelling more difficult for impaired persons.
- Lengthen travelling time and thus a public inconvenience. Newcastle station is quite handy to the CBD already. Why pay all that mostly taxpayers' money for this work?

- Is there a danger that some involved in aspects of this line's closure become the focus of future the ICAC attention and importantly, do the current transport and planning ministers really want to be caught up in this sometime down the track?
- There is also a strong heritage aspect to this involving the railway's buildings and infrastructure. The railway played an important part to make modern Newcastle.

I firmly believe the present 26 December 2014 closedown of the Newcastle railway should be at the very least, deferred until after the March 2015 State election to allow the project to be fully considered by the newly elected in-coming government.

Leon Oberg

27 September, 2014