

**Submission  
No 240**

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

**Name:** Mr Greg James

**Date received:** 24/10/2014

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I submit the following 2 points ..

1. The closing of the Newcastle rail line while the select committee is inquiring could be considered contempt of parliament.

The scheduled date of closure and removal of the Newcastle train line, 26th December 2014, is 10 weeks before Parliament requires this select committee to report on 5 March 2015, and 15 weeks after the select committee was empowered. This makes irrelevant the select committee's enquiry into one of the terms of reference, "(e) the decision to terminate the Newcastle rail line at Wickham ", as this rail line will be removed while the select committee is inquiring into the decision.

The rail must not be closed and destroyed before this select committee reports to parliament.

2. Planning processes need to be transparent and without taint of questionable influence. The recent ICAC investigations into mayors and politicians in Newcastle and the broader Hunter Region have exposed questionable influence.

To suggest that the planning processes and ultimate decisions of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Newcastle City Council, UrbanGrowth NSW, Lake Macquarie Council, and the Hunter Development Corporation were not influenced, or at least publicly tarnished, by the illegal dealings that ICAC exposed is to suggest that ICAC was a waste of tax-payers' money. If the same planning processes and decisions would have been made in precisely the same manner with or without these illegal dealings then why are these dealings illegal ? To allow the planning decisions to stand would be to invalidate the recent ICAC investigations, and to suggest that the laws against these dealings are, at best, misguided.

The implementation of these tainted planning decisions needs to be delayed until after the next state election, March 2015. This gives the people and their new government the chance to validate these decisions without taint, or rescind them. This is particularly important for the irrevocable destruction of the rail line to Newcastle. Once destroyed, it is gone.