

**Submission
No 22**

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

Name: Mr Steven Roberts

Date received: 6/10/2014

To: Legislative Council of NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the planning process in Newcastle and the broader Hunter Region.

October 6, 2014

Attention: Teresa McMichael

I hereby provide my submission to the Legislative Council of NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the planning process in Newcastle and the broader Hunter Region.

My family are regular users of public transport, myself on the Newcastle line to Sydney and my two sons, both University students, who travel from Fassifern to Warrabrook. I am concerned the decision to cut the Newcastle rail at Wickham on December 26, 2014 has been made improperly.

I can accept that the NSW Government would like to create a new city 'hub' terminus at Wickham, just like the long promised and equally important 'Glendale Interchange' and I am extremely positive about the potential for an expanded light rail network in the Newcastle area.

It is the decision regarding the timing of the closure (December 26, 2014) of the Newcastle rail line at Wickham and the decision regarding any proposal to construct light rail including along Hunter and Scott Streets that I base my submission for the following reasons:

1. **There is absolutely no justification to rush and stop the current train services** to Newcastle on 26 December, 2014. There is no alternative plan in place and no evidence to demonstrate that a light rail will be constructed other than on "trust." I believe a new transport interchange can be constructed without truncating the rail. A temporary closure will be a significant hindrance to existing patrons and will only serve to discourage a generation of public transport users.
2. **The existing corridor is the best route for light rail.** After much debate, our community was ready to accept light rail provided it utilised existing tracks and infrastructure (and even the existing rolling stock at reduced speed – eg: the Maitland line trains). Then, "all of a sudden", the Lord Mayor's 'preferred' (and much more expensive) route along Hunter and Scott Streets, was "all of a sudden" endorsed by the NSW parliament. Given this route is only metres from

the existing corridor I believe that decision cannot be taken seriously. Surely our funds could be better spent to expand light rail along new routes such as from Civic to Merewether via Darby Street or from Mayfield to Bar Beach via Hunter TAFE, Hamilton station and The Junction.

3. There is no published plan for temporary arrangements if the rail is truncated.

We do not know the details such as; how we will transfer lines or how long these delays will be each day. There is a big difference between a few minutes and 20 minutes.

It appears incomprehensible for the NSW Government to truncate the rail prematurely creating enormous inconvenience to current patrons, many travelling from Maitland and Lake Macquarie, so that existing infrastructure is ripped up simply to re-lay it a few metres to the south at some time in the future.

When I was school student at Toronto – the NSW Government was debating closing the branch rail line from Fassifern to Toronto. My parents said; “Don’t worry they are going to build a new transport interchange on the other side of the road.” In 1990 the rail was closed. There is no interchange. We still have the temporary private bus (which literally drove patrons away from the train!)

It simply does not make any sense to cut the Newcastle rail line and spend millions of dollars ripping up existing infrastructure when more people will live, work and study in Newcastle. They along with the thousands of new students travelling from all over the Hunter region every day to their new University campus just metres from the current Civic station will not accept an inefficient transport interchange.

I believe while Newcastle needs a transport hub (at least to terminate the Intercity trains to and from Sydney), the decisions taken to truncate the line on December 26, 2014 and to run a light rail other than along the existing corridor cannot be justified and should be reversed immediately.

Steven Roberts