

**Submission  
No 84**

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

**Name:** Mr Douglas Paisley

**Date received:** 20/10/2014

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17 October 2014

The Rev. The Hon Mr Fred Nile MLC  
Committee Chairperson  
Select Committee Newcastle Planning  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

via email: [newcastleplanning@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:newcastleplanning@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

**Re: Submission concerning proposed closure of part railway line**

In regard to the terms of reference of the Committee, I make the following submissions in relation to the proposed closure of the railway line from Wickham to Newcastle:

**1. Proposed Closure**

The proposal to close the line is a bad decision and should not proceed. Residents, visitors, travellers, students and others all need access to the heart of the city in the quickest and cheapest manner and the railway serves all people in this way. Newcastle city is seeing and will see more housing constructed than at any time in the past, and the railway is the vital travel link. Those without motor vehicles, and those going to Sydney for business and for travel from Sydney Airport are especially inconvenienced.

**2. University Campus**

Part of the University campus is to be moved to the old historical Post Office building in Newcastle, and the railway is the best means of access for students from all parts of the Hunter Valley to the city's heart.

**3. Seaside, Churches, Cultural Focus**

The railway enables young and old to visit Newcastle's beaches and sea baths. It also allows ratepayers easy access to the City Council chambers at Civic to meet Councillors and/or attending Council meetings and cultural events. Many of Newcastle's churches, galleries, cinemas and shops are within walking distance of the railway for people coming from the north west and south.

#### **4. Country Trains and travellers**

All Country trains stop at Broadmeadow and local or Sydney trains convey people to the heart of the city. The proposal to cut the line forces all travellers to alight too far from the city centre to walk, and to transfer to other transport with luggage, losing time and patience. The last thing travellers need is an increase in journey time while transferring to another mode of transport. The railway loses passengers and fares.

#### **5. Cost of Closure**

Some years ago, under Premier Bob Carr, closure was mooted and the cost of removing the railway far outweighed any benefit to the community, only to those acquiring the land; public land at that. The proposal to build a light rail is pointless; why replace heavy rail with light rail in an existing system connected to Sydney by a good service every hour?

#### **6. Developers**

The proposal appears to be put forward by those interests wanting to acquire public land for their own purposes, that is to build blocks of units and flats on the land. The railway acts as open space for the city, so that existing buildings have light, air and views by reason of that open space. If high risk buildings were to be erected on the land, the old city would suffer, blocked in by shadow and lose its openness. There is other land for buildings and developers to acquire for their purposes so they do not end a vital public transport link.

#### **7. Comparison**

Other railway closures in our lifetime of the Toronto branch, the Kurrajong branch and the Camden branch have all, with hindsight, been foolish moves. Large cities such as Sydney and Newcastle need public transport from outlying areas to their centres, and need the branches to feed the main lines. It seems tortured logic to suggest that Newcastle will benefit without its railway, just as other Branch closures have brought no benefit to outlying areas of Newcastle and Sydney.

#### **8. Light Rail Proposal**

We are all aware of the high cost of one light rail line to be built in Sydney to serve a heavily populated part of this city. It may be suggested that any State Government, always hard pressed for funds, will find any and every excuse not to build a light rail in Newcastle. The argument might easily be that it is no longer required or that the money can't be found.

## **9. From Sydney Airport**

Many people come from Sydney Airport to Newcastle by train, indeed are encouraged to do so, not by the fares(!), but by the convenience and simply catch the Newcastle train to the terminus when returning home.

## **10. Bus Terminus**

At Newcastle station, there is a convenient bus terminus enabling travellers to travel to parts not served by rail. The connexion is easy and convenient. Will this land be sold off as well? Has anything been discussed about the cost of moving the terminus to Wickham?

## **11. Rail Corridor**

At all costs the corridor must be preserved for public use as it is public land. Even a proposal to build over the line or an underground easement must be considered, though these are far from ideal. Stations in Sydney which have been built over, such as Kogarah and Hurstville, no longer have the open pleasant feeling for passengers as formerly. At least those stations are still functioning, and there is transport.

## **12. Stockton Ferry**

The growing popularity of the seaside suburb of Stockton means rail travellers, as well as the local people, may move more easily from the city to Stockton by the ferry service. A ferry from Wickham (if that were possible) would be a less popular, slower and an under-used service with no other reason other than the railway for its existence. How long would it remain?

I am grateful to the Committee for the opportunity to write and forward my thoughts, and wish the Committee well in its investigations and deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

Douglas R. Paisley

PS Would you kindly acknowledge receipt.