

**Submission
No 101**

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

Name: Mr Lloyd Newlands

Date received: 21/10/2014

Wickham Transport Interchange re: Heavy Rail vs. Light Rail

I reside in Newcastle (suburb Maryville) and I am very familiar with traffic flow, transport, shopping and general activities in the Newcastle CBD.

I have followed the proposed revitalising of Newcastle and entered into many, many discussions with relations and friends regarding the heavy rail. The majority agree leave the heavy rail, however many of them do not follow up to make the government aware of their expectations.

To me there is not much difference in advantages or disadvantages between light rail and the existing heavy rail. It is wasting public money replacing one system with a similar system.

After studying and seeing the new Wickham Rail proposal, I am concerned about several issues, also the permanent closing of the Railway Street level crossing. There is a substantial number of commercial vehicles and cars that access these gates.

If closed, traffic congestion will STILL occur at Stewart Avenue line crossing, because of:-

1. More vehicles re-directed through Stewart Avenue line crossing.
2. Pedestrians crossing over Stewart Avenue to and from trains.
3. Trams to cross Stewart Avenue every 10 minutes as proposed, causing more inconvenience than the current situation.
4. No co-ordination with existing three sets of traffic lights in Stewart Avenue.

I wonder if GPT and UrbanGrowth have the biggest influence, calling the shots to have the heavy rail removed? Obviously it's not the Newcastle people in general, as proven by nearly 11,700 signatures presented to the government to save the heavy rail.

I ask the question, how many signatures were submitted to the government to remove the heavy rail?

To satisfy business owners and others regarding the Hunter Street mall Development and their concern about limited access to the harbour, my suggestion would be to put extra railway and pedestrian crossings along the heavy rail line.

If light rail is built from Wickham Interchange to the beach, then the bus terminus at Newcastle railway station should remain at the existing location, for all incoming & outgoing suburban public buses. It works very efficiently at present.

Why truncate the heavy rail line before work starts in Hunter Street for light rail? This would prove that light rail will be built in the very near future by laying actual light rail tracks as proposed on plans.

In the meantime when I visit the Hunter Street Mall, I can honestly say I have no problem accessing the water front.

I believe the government should put the heavy/light rail proposal on hold, until the new University Campus and new Court House buildings in Hunter Street are completed and fully occupied. The heavy rail line could then be temporarily truncated at Wickham and with the use of buses, trial and monitor the effect of the proposed change to the Newcastle transport system.

It would be more practicable and logical before rushing to truncate the heavy rail on Boxing Day.

Who is the Government trying to please, with the rush to truncate the heavy rail?

I have tried to keep my concerns brief and sensible, and I am not pushing the agenda for any political party.

Thanks for the opportunity to have my say.