

Submission
No 145

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

To: The Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region

Support for retaining the current rail line to Newcastle

Given the findings of the ICAC enquiry that the 2011 state election for the seats of Newcastle and Charlestown in the Hunter region, and the 2012 mayoral election for Newcastle, were affected by corruption. Subsequent decisions regarding the region are likely to have been made to favour developers rather than for the benefit of the community and region.

The decision to remove the railway line to Newcastle defies logic and appears to have been made without sufficient consultation or consideration for the real issues, current and future. Cutting the rail to Newcastle and building a new interchange is an extreme waste of money and would not provide an improvement in transport for the region. On the contrary, cutting the present rail line will:

- Create lengthier trips for passengers, with increased challenges for passengers with reduced mobility, wheelchairs or prams.
- Remove an energy-efficient means of transport to the city centre which enables access directly from the city centre and linking to numerous areas both within Newcastle, the Hunter Region and beyond.

Additionally, there appears to be little progress in the plan for a replacement light-rail, with trains replaced by further buses on the city's streets. The rail line is exactly the kind of public transport that will ease congestion on our roads, now and in the future.

I am a regular train user, both within Newcastle and to Sydney for work. In addition, I often catch the train to and from Newcastle with my 3 small children and cannot imagine losing such a valuable resource. The inconvenience and difficulty of changing forms of transport and extending the trip certainly does not add up to a good transport solution. My office is in Newcastle and on days when I'm unable to catch the train to work, I drive instead and cross the railway line at Hannell Street. The very short time that the gates are down at the crossing for a train to go through are of absolutely no more inconvenience than a set of traffic lights, which we all accept are part of coordinating traffic movement. If the plan truly addresses the issue of reducing traffic congestion, moving people in and out of the city in an energy-efficient, sustainable way and offering a transport option that is accessible to everyone, then the current rail line to Newcastle must stay.