

**Submission
No 250**

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

Name: Ms Genni Siudek

Date received: 24/10/2014

Genni Siudek

24th October 2014

The Director
Select Committee on Planning Process
in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region.

Dear Sir / Madam

I wish to make a submission to the Committee regarding the proposal to terminate the rail line at Wickham and provide an alternate transport system into Newcastle.

As a Newcastle-born resident of the Hunter Valley I have been saddened by the decline and near demise of the Newcastle CBD over the past 30 years. The once vital and busy retail and entertainment sectors have virtually disappeared, leaving a strip of empty decaying buildings amongst pockets of commercial activity and a few pubs.

Newcastle is situated in an enviable and unique position amongst Australian cities, with a working harbour and beautiful beaches located a short walk from the CBD. Having an uninterrupted rail line which conveys passengers to the door step of all that is an incredible asset for the people of the Hunter and a big drawcard for the many tourists who visit Newcastle.

My family and I have been regular users of the train into Newcastle for many years. It would be most inconvenient to have to change trains or get on a bus at Wickham for the very short journey up to the other end of the Newcastle. It would be particularly inconvenient for the many people who are able now to travel to all stations into Newcastle with their surfboards,

bicycles, prams or luggage. If passengers are obliged to transfer to another rail system or onto a bus during their journey, will they be able to take these items with them with ease?

The decision to close the rail line from Boxing Day is ridiculous. Not only is this at the start of the busy school summer vacation, when many more people will be heading to the beach and Foreshore, but the line is being closed before any replacement system has begun, let alone completed. People should not be expected to queue up for buses in Broadmeadow, Hamilton or Wickham in order to complete their journeys. How much extra time is added to each trip by having to wait for buses?

The decision to terminate the rail line and provide an, as yet, unclear alternative transport system into Newcastle seems to have been made hastily, without proper thought and perhaps with the taint of corruption. In light of the findings made by ICAC recently concerning the Members for Newcastle, Charlestown, Swansea and Port Stephens, and Mike Gallacher and Jeff McCloy, all proposals made by the State Government concerning Newcastle should now be halted until at least the next election.

What benefit is there in removing the heavy rail line ? There will be no real benefits to Newcastle or to railway users. What will become of the Newcastle Station buildings ? Allowed to become a target for vandals and fall into disrepair like so many other vacant buildings around town?

The money required to remove the heavy rail line, construct an interchange building and put in light rail or more buses up Hunter St really could be better spent elsewhere in order to revitalise the city of Newcastle. She deserves it.

I firmly believe that the decision to cut the rail line would be one very much regretted in later years.

Yours Sincerely,

Genni Siudek.