

**Submission
No 281**

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

Name: Mr Tony Lawler

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24 October 2014

The Director
Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle
and the Broader Hunter Region
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Committee Members,

ATTENTION: COMMITTEE MEMBERS

I am writing as a Hunter region resident, former Hotelier and current property owner and now resident within the Newcastle Central Business District (CBD) since 2002. The reason for this submission is in support of retention and improvement to the heavy rail line service in Newcastle East, as it is integral to enable people access and equity to Newcastle's CBD for their livelihood, residency and enjoyment.

My N.S.W. Heritage listed residence 'Manufacturers House', formerly Dalgety House 1927, which I am restoring has been renovated to provide accommodation for students attending University of Newcastle campus at Callaghan (Warabrook Station).

I am very grateful to The N.S.W. Office of Environment & Heritage for financial support to help preserve a building of State significance.

The student's tenancy agreements were signed with access to existing seamless rail transport to the Callaghan Campus train station at Warabrook. Consequently, students will have an unknown travel time which is a concern for them and myself if the heavy rail line is cut.

The fact that the light rail has not been fully costed, begs the question: 'Is it financially viable to cut the heavy rail line access and/or has the funding been approved by the N.S.W. Planning Department and Treasury?

A three (3) year planned disruption to current seamless connectivity to University of Newcastle, adds to student concerns.

Hence, I seek clarification from the Parliamentary Inquiry regarding the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region into all planning, studies, investigations and reviews. In addition, I seek the release of all reports regarding the decision/s to cut heavy rail services to the Newcastle CBD. In particular, I seek the inquiry to investigate the **key facts** as denoted by Michelle Harris, The Herald on Saturday, June 7, 2014 (p.46) as follows:

THE state government is sitting on key reports for Newcastle's light rail project, including the business case, because it says the documents contain "commercially sensitive" information or are intended for cabinet.

Several consultancy firms were commissioned last year to advise on the project.

Newcastle-based firm GHD, was appointed in September to analyse the best place for a new transport interchange and alignment of the light rail route, as well as opportunities to link the route to surrounding suburbs and the broader region in the future.

In December, Ernst and Young was awarded a tender to develop a business case and economic studies for light rail.

And URS was appointed the same month to give detailed advice on the interchange's design.

Parsons Brinckerhoff was brought on board in January this year to give "detailed technical advice" on the light rail system.

The government announced in May its preferred "hybrid" route for light rail along the heavy rail corridor and into Hunter Street and Scott Street, ending at Pacific Street.

But none of the consultants' documents have yet been made public. A Transport for NSW spokesman said the documents "are either commercially sensitive, in draft form or cabinet in confidence". "The public release of commercially sensitive documents would undermine future tender processes." he said. "This is consistent with our approach for all other similar infrastructure projects."

The government has yet to outline a timetable for construction, beyond truncating the heavy rail this year. It set aside \$340 million from the Port of Newcastle lease, and \$120 million from the Restart NSW fund and the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund.

First, the above article states that Ernst & Young's tender to develop a business case and economic studies for light rail. URS was appointed to give detailed advice on the interchange's design. Parsons Brinckerhoff was also brought on board in January this year to give detailed technical advice" on the light rail proposal. However, as reported above, "...the government has not given a timetable for construction, beyond cutting the heavy rail line this year".

Second, according to the report, it took a year for planning approval for CBD and South-East Sydney light rail system. However, the government has provided no costing, timetable/s, commencement nor completion dates as per article above and attached PDF.

As a member of Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance (NICRA) and Save Our Rail (SOR), we residents of the Hunter region and beyond, seek to voice our **opinions**. We find it unacceptable that a perfectly effective, fully functioning and integrated heavy rail system that links the Hunter region and beyond to the Newcastle CBD, community and inner city dwellers is being removed.

Third, the fact that infrastructure is proposed for removal before any costing or timetable for replacement is submitted is unacceptable.

As the foundation of Australia's democracy and government transparency policy, we seek the following **recommendations for action**:

- * That all relevant documents relating to the decision to terminate the heavy rail line in Newcastle CBD be released and made available to this inquiry.
- * That all relevant Cabinet Ministers' diaries be made available to this inquiry
- * That the relevant Planning Department Officers' diaries be made available.
- * That the relevant Transport Department Officers' diaries be made available.
- * That the relevant Finance Department Officers' diaries be made available.

Please read all of my previous submissions (attached) to fully appreciate my long held views that;

IMPROVEMENT NOT REMOVAL

is what The Hunter Regions populace requires. We live,work and play here. Would the removal of the Cronulla line be accepted?

It goes nowhere,only to Cronulla Beach. Newcastle Rail not only goes to the beach, but to the Heart of Australia's 6th largest city.

Please, we expect nothing more or less.

The Heritage value of Newcastle Station, in it's entirety should be sufficient to automatically stop THE CHOP.

I have had to GLADLY dot every 'i' and cross every 't' in order to satisfy my requirements under The N.S.W. Heritage Act.

It appears the N.S.W. Department's of Planning, Transport and Treasury don't have to meet such basic requirements.

This appears to place me in a different category.

Perhaps this committee could discover why these discrepancies exist.

Following your Inquiries President, Mr. Rev. Fred Nile's recent visit to Newcastle, where he enjoyed lunch on my Rooftop Terrace I have this week invited your committee to visit my rooftop, to marvel at Newcastle's not often seen vista, whilst you are sitting in Newcastle.

Again, I extend my hand in friendship.

This visit could be in the form of Morning or Afternoon Tea, Lunch, or Sunset Beverages.

Sunset, over the Newcastle Cathedral, really is a marvel, one I am very happy to share.

I can show that I can get a return on my investment, by 'living within current planning guidelines'.

I don't need to seek 'special' favours from anybody.

Greed doesn't drive me. I am happy to get a return which satisfies the bank, with a bit left over for me. Unfortunately, unlike other developers, as revealed in recent I.C.A.C. deliberations.

I think it appalling, the thought that 20 storied buildings could be contemplated to block the marvellous vista to and from The Newcastle Cathedral.

Lonely Planet recently voted Newcastle No.9 in the must see places in the World.

The only Australian City.

The rail connection would have gone into their calculations, as would have the beautiful vista to and from OUR Cathedral.

Removal of either will only detrimentally affect visitor numbers, and only 2.5hrs. from Central Rail Station.

The magnificent visit to Newcastle Station by The Heritage Rail organisation, this October Long Weekend brought hundreds, if not thousands to our city.

Please ensure future generations will be able to see such marvellous steam machines pull into the State's Rail Second Oldest Home.

The Lachlan Valley Railway is planning trips over the weekends of 8th&9th and 15th&16th November 2014. (Timetables Attached).

Please I invite you all to ride one of these Steam Trains, to really feel, as WE feel.

The tourism value of such visits cannot be under estimated.

In a region of such high youth unemployment, anything that can help to diversify our local economy in a sustainable way should be encouraged.

In my opinion this is a criminal act and should be treated as such.

Generations of future Australians will look back at the CHOPPING OFF of Newcastle with complete confusion.

This prospect is so alien to me that I have been fighting previous attempts, with as much 'gusto', as this hopefully failed attempt.

I call on this committee to encourage all dismantalling of rail infrastructure to cease from now.

It has recently been revealed that there is a directive from Premier Baird to do as much destruction after the cutting of services from Boxing Day, so as to render the line beyond salvation.

There are calls for Green Bans to be placed on destruction of this vital service.

I encourage your committee to 'openly encourage' such actions.

Many communities might expect Goodwill in The Christmas period from their government.

Unfortunately, the 'supposed Christian Mr. Baird' thinks taking away taxpayer funded infrastructure is a reflection of Christ's work.
I am sure Jesus Christ would have stood up to the tyranny, if the Romans had proposed such a dastardly act!

We recommend that planning ought to be undertaken by independent government bodies, rather than outsourced reports framed in a way that could be seen to procure a desired result.

Only when our governing bodies are transparent will faith be restored in our democratic institutions.

If the cutting of the heavy rail into The Premier State's Second largest City, two weeks before Our City hosting of The Asian Games, will prove that paying enough money to enough people often enough, will get the desired effect.

I believe that is called corruption.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

Tony Lawler

Attachments: Newcastle Herald Saturday, June 7, 2014 (pg.46) article

Submissions Newcastle Rail Line. 7 January, 2006. Mr Watkins, Minister for Transport 2006.

Newcastle Rail Line. 20 November, 2008. Mr. Campbell Minister for Transport 2008.

Retention of Rail Line. 3 December, 2008. Ms. Mc Kay. Member for Newcastle & Minister for Hunter 2008.

Previous submissions to Mr Tim Owen February 2012 and February 2014

Responses Mr Baird & Ms. Berejiklian Premier & Minister for Transport & Hunter. October 2014.

Lachlan Valley Railway, 'Steam On The Newcastle Line' November Timetables.