

**Submission  
No 66**

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

**Name:** Mr Peter Willis

**Date received:** 16/10/2014

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The Director

Select committee on the Planning process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter region

Parliament House, Macquarie St., Sydney

Dear Sir

I wish to complain strongly about the proposed closure of the Wickham - Newcastle Railway line.

It appears to me that the assessment of the proposal has been influenced by an unethical process.

At the present time the Liberal/National coalition Government has had, since the 2011 Election, 8 MP's move to the cross benches for allegedly improper conduct and two MP's have resigned because they have been accepting funds to which they were not entitled. The Newcastle Lord Mayor has also resigned for allegedly attempting to influence the members for the seats of Newcastle and Charlestown (the two who have resigned) with cash payments. Of the 8 members transferring to the cross benches, one is the member for Port Stephens and a number of others represent seats along the Central Coast ( 3 will not contest their seats in the March Election) which is geographically next to greater Newcastle.

All of the above people have strong links with Newcastle and because of their influence may benefit financially from the proposed railway closure. In the circumstances I feel it is only fair to delay the railway line closure until the problem of unethical dealing has been fully investigated.

In the "Newcastle City Centre Finalisation Report" of 2012, there were over 400 submissions. Of these 68% were about the railway line closure. The vast majority of those submissions were against the closure. IE more than 50% in total were against it. The financial influence over MP's in 2011 was prior to this report. To what extent was this influence of MP's used to totally ignore this more than 50%?

It is expected the new Light Rail to replace the railway will cost about \$340M. This is over \$100m per kilometre of line.

I doubt if the light rail could ever be viable because:

- The capital cost.
- It will be too short.
- Specialist maintenance and servicing facilities will be inadequate for such a small fleet.
- Planning has so far not shown where a servicing facility will be.
- No costing has been publicised.

Since the 2012 Planning Report was published construction has started on the Newcastle Court House, a building of several stories. The Newcastle University campus expansion planned several years ago has been announced. The campus is expected to have around 4000 students with up to 2300 present at any one time. Car parking for 5 cars is proposed. How ridiculous. Both developments are very close to the existing Civic Station. Direct transport, without having to change, will surely encourage more use of public transport

A Transport Dept report expects public transport use will reduce to 77% of present levels once the railway is closed and yet Government and Council claim that they want to increase the use of public transport.

We need to improve our existing infrastructure rather than destroy a facility that many similarly sized cities would envy.

Yours faithfully

Peter Willis