

**Submission  
No 94**

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

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## Newcastle Planning Enquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed truncation of the Newcastle rail link.

My comments relate to the proposed truncation of the Newcastle Railway Line to Wickham, and its replacement by a bus or light rail service for passengers to reach the Newcastle CBD in the proximity of its present centrally located Railway Station.

This proposal will inconvenience public transit users and the general community by forcing a change in mode of transport, which apart from the inconvenience, particularly to the elderly and disabled, will increase journey times significantly and increase pollution and traffic congestion by using inferior, less comfortable and less safe means of transit for the section of journey into and out of Newcastle.

I foresee that with the truncation of services, more people will be inclined to use their private vehicles to access Newcastle itself, which will put more strain on parking within the CBD. Also more people will tend to use buses for the whole journey from outlying suburbs where these are available, adding to congestion and meaning that the suburb train journeys and indeed those further afield to places such as the Central Coast and Sydney will be patronised less. Running trains with few passengers is a waste of resources. Encouragement for commuters and tourists using road based services flies in the face of world trends, is environmentally destructive and very much outmoded 1950s thinking.

The closure of and removal of this section of track would be vandalism of the worst order. Whilst the track does form somewhat of a barrier between the land and foreshore, any developers can readily overcome the present inconvenience to pedestrians by utilising the airspace above the tracks and incorporate ramps, lifts and escalators to assist movement between the northern and southern sides of the present line. Indeed with a little architectural imagination, the buildings can be designed with terraces and walkways so that views are obtained over the waterway which are not presently available. Such buildings would take away the constraints which presently exist for pedestrian movement across the tracks, and negate the need for money to provide such facilities to be at public expense.

In removing this section of track, we would be repeating exactly the same planning disaster that our cousins across the Tasman sea managed to achieve in 1930, and took three quarters of century to recover from. The original railway station in Auckland, though not architecturally grand, was once situated conveniently at the foot of Queen Street, which is the main business and commercial centre. A new grandiose terminal was built at great expense a mile or so away from the city centre, necessitating a change to trams to get to and from downtown. For many years the Auckland suburban rail system languished with very few passengers and in a rundown state, until late 20<sup>th</sup> century, when with increasing road congestion and slow and uncomfortable bus transport, the station was re-instated on its former site at Britomart. Now the Auckland suburban rail services are being rejuvenated with patronage increasing year by year.

So can't we learn from history and avoid repeating planning mistakes which are a disaster for the citizens of this fine city? Surely the citizens of Newcastle deserve better than have decisions made which were in vogue more than 50 years ago, and will inflict on them flawed decisions which will take another 75 years to overturn at enormous expense?

We need to encourage the use of direct services rather than reduce them to a point outside the city and force time-consuming and inconvenient transfers on commuters at some glorified tin shed to a jerky bus service lurching from one set of traffic lights to another.