

**Submission
No 44**

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

Name: Mr Max Bignell

Date received: 12/10/2014

Re: Submission to the planning enquiry into the state governments handling of the Newcastle rail line closure.

Dear Sir, as a resident of Newcastle I deplore the actions of the government in their plan to terminate the rail line at Wickham given the great support for that decision to be cancelled.

The question that needs to be answered is;

Who benefits from the closure of the line into the East End of Newcastle?

Certainly not the commuters who use it daily to attend their workplaces or those who travel to our great beaches and including the many tourists who visit our region as well as those who choose to travel further afield on our rail system from the inner city area.

The planning minister has stated that the rail corridor would remain in public ownership but would not rule out the government considering a “brilliant Idea” by a developer in the future.

One needs to wonder given the recent disgraceful antics of some officials, who have fallen on their sword through the ICAC revelations, how long and how much money in a brown envelope would it be before a developer provided a “brilliant idea” to redevelop the area.

Newcastle east end needs to be revitalised and there is no dispute about that, however, instead of making it more difficult for people to get there, as surely will happen when several modes of transport are introduced into the trip, why not encourage more people to attend the area.

Some suggestions that may be considered.

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Build a shopping mall that incorporates the Newcastle railway station.

Build a shopping mall over the rail line with parking underneath either side so that access can be from Hunter St or Wharf Rd. Other Cities do this rather successfully.

Much has been said about linking Honeysuckle with the Hunter St area. I suggest that several covered pedestrian walkways similar to the current one at Queens's wharf be constructed at specific locations along Hunter St.

The Merewether St. road to be closed, it is not such a task to use Watt St to access Wharf Rd. and at the Stewart Ave. rail crossing have an overpass from near the Albion hotel to near Birdwood park that crosses both the line and Hunter St with associated access and exit roads. (as should have happened years ago).

Further beautification of the rail corridor should be considered giving the whole area a more pleasant feel so that people would feel comfortable in coming to the area.

So instead of disadvantaging the travelling public why not advantage the Newcastle community by creating a location that is easy to access by the current rail system.

Max Bignell