

**Submission
No 29**

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

Organisation: Australian Labor Party West Wallsend Branch

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AUSTRALIAN
LABOR
PARTY

WEST WALLSEND BRANCH

Secretary

Bernard Griffin

President

Brian Adamthwaite

7th October 2014

The Director
The Select Committee on the Planning Process
In the Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Director,

At the September meeting of the West Wallsend Branch members discussed an issue that is gathering great momentum in the Hunter Valley within local cities and communities surrounding Newcastle and indeed within the city itself. As secretary I was authorised to write a submission to the Select Committee concerning the closure of the rail line into Newcastle and its truncation at Wickham.

Branch members make use of many public transport options in their commuting between their residences and the greater council areas of both Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.

In the most recent publicity surrounding the closure of the Newcastle rail line it would appear that not only will users of the rail system be disadvantaged but also large numbers of commuters using the bus network.

I would suggest that committee members look at Broadmeadow Rail Station and Hamilton Rail Station and note the dearth of parking already available around the stations and the narrow streets? How will extra buses cope with the poor physical layout of the stations?

The committee will be fully aware of the recent loss of two members of the government who have admitted to taking illicit bribes. The two members, the Member for Newcastle and the Member for Charlestown have now both resigned in disgrace from the Legislative Assembly for lying to ICAC.

Following these departures the next resignation was the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy. Why? For furnishing paper bags stuffed with cash to the above members. As well as these disgraced MP's others were proffered cash from McCloy. Many of these have not resigned but have moved to the cross benches.

How can the public be assured of the propriety of the campaign to close the rail line? The campaign seems to have been spear headed by the now discredited ex-Lord Mayor and the Newcastle Business Alliance and a business orientated Hunter Development Corporation.

The spokesperson for the NBA Paul Murphy was humiliated at ICAC, seemingly unable to recall many events pertinent to events in Newcastle when asked. How much money was contributed to that campaign by the ex-Lord Mayor?

Revelations disclosed at ICAC indicate that the corruption dagger has indeed been thrust deep into the Newcastle Business Alliance.

It is interesting to note in the original proposal that the line was to be used for the tram corridor. This would have been a complete anathema to the developers because the land they wanted would still have been owned by the public. Branch members believe that the rail corridor is about the only part of Newcastle not undermined. Funny that developers would want that piece of land!!!

Members now know that the Member for Lake Macquarie Greg Piper MP has introduced a private members Bill (Newcastle Inner City Rail Corridor Preservation Bill 2014) to ensure that the rail line remains as public land. Will the government support such a bill? If not, why not?

How much money will be pocketed by developers when the rail line is built over?

How much money will the government make when it sells the land?

It seems that the opinions from surrounding council areas and commuters from those areas were not canvassed by either the developers anxious to make a "killing" or indeed the government in their haste to close down the existing rail line and inflict major changes to both commuters of rail and bus services.

At Glendale there is an insistent push to build a major transport interchange. Money has been already spent in planning and money is expected from all three governments to build the facility. Why build a major interchange when the line will end up at Wickham? Glendale to Newcastle will become another White Elephant. The public want a decent public transport system within the Hunter, not a truncated white pachyderm as proposed by the government.

It seems that by closing the line in December the government will disadvantage the many members of the public who travel to Newcastle to work and to enjoy both the amenity of the city and of course its famous beaches. Why?

Members believe that the government should acknowledge that it has made a mistake, and scrap plans to disembowel the rail system.

Indeed history will show that "corruption pays", despite the collateral damage on the way. If you donate to the Liberal Party in Newcastle then unless the rail line is retained and the government acknowledges that it made the wrong decision, the whole exercise will only benefit a few rich corrupt developers and business people.

If the rail line is truncated the public will be the poorer. A few individuals who lied to ICAC believing that developers were altruistic will be perhaps gaoled seemingly with their reputations trashed.

Members look forward to your committees' consideration on this vital issue to ensure Newcastle remains an open liveable city with a functioning public transport system including a heavy rail line **all the way** into the city.

We do not want a truncated heavy rail line!!!

Yours sincerely

Bernard Griffin
Branch Secretary