

**Submission
No 316**

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

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Date received: 24/10/2014

I am very concerned about the plans currently in place that have the potential to dramatically and detrimentally change the face of Newcastle. Rather than being the protector of sensible planning principles, the state government seems to be one of the main offenders in this process. I would like to make specific comment concentrating on just two of the issues before the select committee.

Firstly I am concerned about the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Amendment (Newcastle City Centre) 2014 that, if allowed to stand, provides for massive increases in height limits in certain areas of the NEwcastle CBD. These height limit increases essentially give the green light for the creation of a concrete jungle in inner city Newcastle. This is totally inconsistent with the current planning guidelines in the area that have been established by careful and appropriate consideration of urban planning principles. As an inner city resident I object in the strongest possible terms to the specific height limit changes in the SEPP that will have a huge detrimental effect on the residential amenity of the area. More importantly however I strongly object to what is essentially spot rezoning or special case changes to existing planning guidelines to suit specific development proposals. The whole point of having planning guidelines is to guide development. Change the guidelines to suit the developments is putting the cart before the horse in the worst possible way. What is the point in having planning guidelines at all? Other developers have had to meet current guidelines. Why should some developers be allowed to change the rules to suit themselves? The fact that one of the developers involved, Urban Growth NSW, is a part of the government should not change things. In fact, the whole idea of the same government department being responsible for upholding planning guidelines and being a developer seeking to get approval to breach these guidelines is ludicrous. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

I am also very concerned about the proposal to cut the rail line into the city. I have followed this debate for many years now and have never yet heard any rational argument for removing the rail line into the city. I do believe that there is potential for a light rail system in Newcastle to contribute to an improved public transport system but the current proposal makes no sense at all. It is too small, and in the wrong place. This seems to be a huge waste of public money to provide a system that is worse than what we currently have.