

**Submission
No 291**

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

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For the attention of:
Director of the Select Committee on Planning Process in Newcastle and
the Broader Hunter Region
Parliament House,
Macquarie St,
Sydney NSW 2000

As an engineer and industrial heritage advisor based in Newcastle NSW, I am pleased to be able to present my view on the truncation of the Newcastle railway and other planning issues. I congratulate the Legislative Council for undertaking this 11th hour opportunity to stop unreasonable Government actions that, rather than revitalise the city of Newcastle, may do it irreparable harm.

One of my heritage advisory roles is as a director of a NSW heritage transport museum that preserves a representative collection of this State's railway rolling stock. We also provide frequent train journeys using restored locomotives and carriages to enable the people of NSW, and visitors, to experience first-hand the great joy of a ride in a steam or diesel-driven train with gracious timber carriages, or stylish metal carriages, such as the great Southern Aurora.

Heritage train experiences are a successful part of tourist agendas in developed countries around the world, particularly those that preserve and adapt their heritage assets. More importantly, such heritage experiences can assist in developing the tourism appeal of cities that have had a great background of industrial railway history and still retain some useful infrastructure from previous ages of transport, or possibly mining booms.

The exciting tourist city of Skagway in Alaska USA has developed its old railway (previously used for the Klondike Gold Rush) to attract a new rush of cruise ships whose passengers come to enjoy the experience of this gold railway; beautifully restored for the tourist trade. I believe that Newcastle NSW could also develop such a popular tourist attraction using the exceptional qualities of its heritage Railway Station as a terminus for heritage train journeys. We can journey on existing railway lines to destinations to the North - visiting rural Dungog etc.; to the North West - visiting historic Maitland, or equine Scone; to the West - why not use the historic South Maitland Railway to access the Hunter Wine Country at Cessnock; or to the South - enjoying the scenic 'Flyer' trip through the beautiful Hawkesbury River Parklands.

Had I known, or been warned at the time when development plans to truncate the Newcastle railway line and isolate its historic station buildings were

contemplated, I would have proposed this tourism development plan earlier. However, I have now broadcast this alternative plan via an Opinion Editor's piece published in the Newcastle Herald, dated 3rd of October 2014. I have attached a copy of the newspaper clip (Heritage Rail Potential Gold) for readers of this submission to note. I also include my original draft for the Op Ed piece, called "Rail Truncation Inhibits a Broader Vision for Newcastle's Tourism Future" which includes valuable statistical data from Skagway reports used in researching the piece. I trust that you will include these files/statements in any presentations or publications of my submission.

Publication of this plan for tourism development using heritage railways and a burgeoning cruise ship industry was immediately backed up by a program of heritage train experiences operating out of Newcastle Station called "Newcastle City Steam Weekend". This event was held throughout the following Long Weekend in October. Nearly 2,900 heritage train tickets for journeys re-enacting the 'Newcastle Flyer' were sold and many more visitors experienced, photographed, or enjoyed the steam action at Newcastle Station and viewpoints along the track. The event's wide popularity proved how powerful the combination of great architectural buildings hosting stylish and exciting train experiences can be.

The key issue in developing this into a plan for Newcastle's future tourism growth is to ensure that the heritage railway experience remains as authentic and successful as that which draws hundreds of cruise ships per year to Skagway. Newcastle's historic Station buildings will need to remain an essential part of the visitor experience. It will also increase visitor appeal if, as in Skagway's example, the cruise ships are conveniently berthed nearby to the railway station; evoking the journey's historic past.

This proposition that heritage tourism is an alternative to revitalise the city of Newcastle was proposed on the 26th September, both verbally and in writing by myself and another director, to the State Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian. But we were simply told that the railway truncation is a development decision for revitalisation and not an individual transport decision. But I believe that it is a big mistake to ignore recent international experiences which successfully use restored railways to revitalise communities through increased tourism, rather than through redevelopment of railway easements. The Puffing Billy railway has very successfully done this for the Dandenong area in Victoria.

I also believe that the Government ignores other solutions, as redevelopments around and over the railway tracks could now be undertaken using clever construction methods proven in many Sydney suburbs and other cities. For example, the city of Newcastle UK, which its NSW namesake mimics in so many ways, also has a railway and station complex that separates the CBD from its nearby waterway, the River Tyne and associated redevelopment areas on the riverfront. The railway's benefits are planned into development of the city's infrastructure using elevated tracks, as well as elevated and subway road crossings.

I am outraged that the NSW government stubbornly persists with its inexplicable intention of 'truncating' Newcastle City's railway line three stations short of its terminus at the historic Newcastle Station while ignoring arguments such as that posed above. And there have been many other voices recently advising caution using economic, strategic or transport service arguments.

The 'truncation' hints at arrogance, as the government now has no mandate from the people of Newcastle to determine the future of their city in such a brutal way. The recent ICAC inquiry has recently exposed most of the region's Liberal representatives as corrupt and they have resigned in shame. Novocastrians are now left without any local MPs willing to re-contest their seats. We are unrepresented in the Parliament and vulnerable to the personal ambitions of Sydney politicians.

This shame extends right to the top of the pile, where a young and inexperienced Premier has been press-ganged to captain their shipwreck of state. Unfortunately for him (and for us) his early gut reaction has been to lurch the tiller by promising that his government had "identified the money" and was "delivering on that promise" (to truncate the rail). So the city of Newcastle's transport infrastructure will suffer - simply as a result of this Premier's overriding determination to be seen as getting the city's renewal moving.

Rather than continuing to force this action to ensure that he is not labelled as just another promise-breaker, this Premier would be well-advised to steer a course of fairness and caution by delaying truncation of the Newcastle railway. Failure to do this will likely result in an even angrier and enduring aversion to him and his party within the Central Coast and Hunter regions.

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"Industrial Heritage Interpretation"

Attached files: "Rail Truncation Inhibits a Broader Vision for Newcastle's
Tourism Future_141003.doc"

"Heritage.Rail.Potential.Gold-Ncle.He.rOp.Ed 141003.pdf"