

**Submission  
No 41**

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

**Name:** Mr David Threlfo

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11 October 2014

**SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PLANNING PROCESS IN  
NEWCASTLE AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

From David Threlfo

**RE:** (e) The decision to terminate the Newcastle rail line at Wickham and any proposal to construct light rail including along Hunter and Scott Streets

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to raise my genuine concerns over this issue. Since 15 July this year, I have been emailing Newcastle's then MP Tim Owen and following his resignation, the NSW Premier Mike Baird and Transport Minister Gladys Berjiklian with my concerns over the real reasons behind cutting the rail line into Newcastle's CBD. ( I have worked in Newcastle's CBD for over 35 years.)

Despite repeated attempts by email, none of the simple engineering, operational and job loss questions put to Ms Berjiklian and Mr Baird have been answered. My continuing emails to them have been ignored at the time of writing this submission. (The full email trail is also being submitted to the Committee as a separate document.) They seem to be ignoring the groundswell of concern here.

To support my emails to Mr Owen, Mr Baird and Ms Berjiklian, I have produced a number of public YouTube videos on the Newcastle Rail Line. These include footage that shows how heavily used the Newcastle CBD services actually are; interviews with rail passengers about the CBD line; a detailed time-lapse study that shows the truth behind traffic delays at the Stewart Avenue level crossing plus a video showing large crowds at Newcastle Station for a heritage steam event in October. Please find links to these short duration videos at the end of this document. (I can supply all videos on a DVD if helpful.)

Former Newcastle MP Tim Owen stated in Hansard on 21 February 2013, about curtailing heavy rail, that *"I doorknocked the vast majority of people in Newcastle and they told me that they want this to happen"*. I do not know anyone who was doorknocked by Mr Owen on this issue.

At the ICAC during 2014, it was revealed that Mr Owen was the recipient of illegal election donations from another anti-rail proponent, developer Jeff McCloy, who went on to be Newcastle's Lord Mayor. Mr McCloy also resigned from office in 2014, following revelations at the ICAC. The disgraceful events surrounding these donations seem strongly related to the push to cut Newcastle's 150 year old CBD rail line.

It is known that the CBD rail corridor and adjoining land and bus layover area next to the station are not undermined and therefore are much cheaper to build substantial structures on. Former NSW planning Minister Brad Hazzard stated in January 2012 that the Newcastle rail corridor *"would always remain in public ownership and will be there for all time"* and be the route of a future light rail system. (ref: *Minister Hazzard announces Newcastle's Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 - YouTube / NSW Planning*)

In the local newspaper 'The Newcastle Star', then Newcastle Lord Mayor Jeff McCloy stated on July 1, 2013 that Hunter Street, not the rail corridor, was the best option for light rail. We then see the NSW State Government start selling the idea of Hunter Street and Scott Street as the best route for light rail. Planning Minister Pru Goward later states publicly about allowing some development on the rail corridor. Mr McCloy, who is later found at the ICAC to have given illegal donations to at least three local Liberal candidates during the 2011 election, seems to be influencing government policy on this issue. The soon to be disgraced MP Tim Owen, who claimed to have been elected on a platform and mandate for removing the CBD rail line, was shown at the ICAC to have received an illegal donation from Mr McCloy. Mr McCloy seems to effect a total change in direction about where light rail is to go, against what was stated by Mr Hazzard, and statements from Ms Goward then appear about development being allowed in some form on the CBD rail corridor.

Despite repeated emails to Ms Berjiklian, she has not responded with a single answer. Just where is the business case for cutting the rail line? I believe that there has been a deliberate misinformation campaign about cutting the line at Wickham – as in reality, the rail services are intended to be cut at Broadmeadow after December 26, 2014. Many of the rail users that I have spoken with at Wickham believe that they will still be getting off the train there after December 26. Adding to this, Mr Baird and Ms Berjiklian now have a situation in Newcastle where voters have no local member to turn to about this issue. With Mr Owen's resignation, it is the perfect opportunity for two people who do not even live in the area – or understand it – are able to push through their agenda to cut a 150 year, perfectly viable form of mass public transit. They ignore emails. They will not engage with local people.

Given the establishment of the new Hunter Street University Campus, that will house thousands of students and staff – with 5 car parking spaces allocated – the decision to end the CBD rail line is astonishing, as the new campus is directly opposite the Civic Railway Station, slated for demolition as part of 'revitalisation'.

The Owen/McCloy/Baird/Berjiklian team put forward buzzwords such as 'connectivity' to our harbour. The rail line is already cut, east of the station. Just where are the hordes of locals craving 'connectivity' as I regularly drive home this way and am yet to see them. Additional, modern at-grade pedestrian crossings could be easily added in the inner city, if needed, to give extra, safe access. I have prepared 3D animated concepts, links are later in this submission, and emailed them to Mr Baird and Ms Berjiklian, but have received not one word. They seem bent on pushing through their anti-rail agenda, totally ignoring local concerns, with a dictatorial arrogance towards the people of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley that is disgusting, at the very least a behaviour that makes locals feel as if we are being punished by the Sydney-centric 'big end of town'. The needs of the few, not the many, at work here.

Simply, many of us feel ignored and powerless in respect of the rail issue. This is not democracy.

A state Premier and Transport Minister who show arrogance, a dictatorship style of government plus an inexplicable plan to cut a mass transit system that will affect the many, for the benefit of the few - those people who will gain financially from the sale of rail corridor and bus layover land. The Liberals came to power in at least two local seats in 2011 with the help of lies and illegal donations. They did not – and still don't have – a mandate for cutting the line. If Mr Baird was genuine about this matter, it would be put to the people who use the line, by way of a referendum. This is the only honest, logical and fair means to end the argument and festering sore of mistrust that the Owen/McCloy/Baird/Berijikian's handling of this vital, generations-changing decision has become in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

Sincere thanks to the Committee for the opportunity to be heard on this matter. Below are links to my YouTube videos that form part of this submission and show the truth behind use of the CBD line.

Kind regards,

VIDEO LINKS – YouTube *(I can also supply these to the Committee on a DVD if helpful)*

**The Last Winter – Newcastle Station:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nr0IMjLs3V4>

**One Crowded Hour – Civic Station:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15HZKdsP038>

**Truth about Stewart Avenue traffic:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2OOA4GO0tk>

**The People Speak – Wickham Station:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChUeqixC3IA>

**Busy Wickham Station:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ReInEIIJ4k>

**Heritage Steam – large CBD rail crowds:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQVCylq9\\_6A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQVCylq9_6A)

**Level Crossing idea – Stewart Avenue:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW9kxspDdZA>

**Pedestrian Crossing Idea – CBD:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qg6TkxZRN8>

**Hansard Statements:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO6qMn-rouk>