

**Submission  
No 218**

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

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The Director

Select Committee of the Planning Process in Newcastle  
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I am concerned with the developments regarding removing the heavy rail into Newcastle. It's not just the act of doing it, but how it is being done – rip the line out then we'll think about the alternatives.

The thing that makes no sense to me about cutting the rail line is the fact that the government is building a 4000-student university at Civic Station. Students who want to catch a train to university from outside the city, in places like Maitland and the wider Hunter, will have to change to a bus, light rail or walk to their place of study when they reach Wickham making public transport to the site complex could lead to traffic congestion in the precinct, if people opted to drive instead of use public transport. Parking at the Shortland campus of the university can be difficult at peak times and there are many hectares of car parks out there.

By the time the University of Newcastle builds its proposed city-centre campus in the Civic precinct, the state government will have removed the heavy rail line between Wickham and Newcastle.

This is already examples of the rail barrier increasing with local residents around Railway Street will lose the easy pedestrian access across the rail line and for what? To provide "connectivity" the politicians will say! Hang on – that's just what they are losing!!

Already a stairway crossing was taken away from that area, so this will be a double blow to the west end precinct. The Lass O'Gowrie hotel, a popular music venue will lose out as many stroll over from the Hamilton and West End of Hunter Street. "I love the friendly atmosphere and the local music at the Lass, which I can walk to from my home in Hunter Street," says Jeane Gravalin.

This Government has decided what it wants to do, pretends there has been some form of community input, when in fact there has only been advice from developer-influenced agents such as HDC then in small releases tells the people what they are getting.

There is no evidence of planning – the light rail route was to go via Bellevue Street and down Hunter Street, then it was to go down the Mall, now it's supposed to throw a dog-leg at Worth Place and go via Hunter and Scott Streets.

Gladys Berejiklian's has now she announced that trains will stop running on Boxing Day and truncation work can begin while the service is stopped. Ms Berejiklian speaks of having more details of an interim bus plan in the coming months – even that is not finalised. This is my question for Gladys, says Joan Dawson, "Is the delay because your Transport people have no idea how they are going to implement this decision, made without consultation with them or anyone else?" It's a planning mess!

Even Ms Berejiklian's statements are an insult to the intelligence. She says truncating the line at Wickham will help "bring jobs, residents and visitors to the city centre." Really? Cutting off the direct transport will have exactly the opposite effect – making it more difficult to access the city will deter many tourists and would-be settlers.

Save Our Rail has undertaken more research towards its transport proposals than the Government has done to justify ripping up a rail line.

"It is back to front planning by the NSW Government, with the public being "consulted" after decisions are made. In fact they are being insulted as well," says Save Our Rail President, Joan Dawson, "because they are being treated as though they don't understand what is going on. I believe the whole crazy idea is to deliver the rail line land to the developer mates, as revealed by planning Minister Goward in her admission that there will be development on the closed rail corridor.

This closure has major implications because traffic will be re-routed to the Stewart Avenue crossing, which is already a very busy intersection. It is difficult to imagine the horror stretch this will become when they have an interchange there with buses converging, pedestrians trying to go from train to tram and all the traffic from Railway Street as well as more frequency with the magical trams running every 10 minutes. What sort of mad planning is this?

THE state government has now confirmed it will allow development on the Newcastle rail corridor.

Despite previous indications from the government that the corridor would be reserved for green space and public use, Planning Minister Pru Goward has said "there will also be some development"

An inquiry has been requested to report on the 5 th March 2014 however the rail is scheduled to be removed on Boxing day what will happen if the enquiry recommends the rail corridor remains rebuild the rail ?

The final insult is the assurance of a "seamless interchange." This is an oxymoron – an interchange cannot be seamless. Staying on the train all the way to Newcastle is seamless; getting off to climb onto a bus certainly cannot be and we are now advised it will add 15 minutes to trips to Newcastle. In London the government is creating new heavy rail infrastructure – Crossrail, Thameslink, etc – "taking rail right through the heart of the city, deemed by our government to be absolutely essential to

provide the transport needs for a modern 21st century city," "The government considers the multi-billion pound price tag well worth the investment in the city's future."

If any of the above essential steps have been taken they have not been released to the public which has been kept in the dark.

Where is the transparency and why is this major change being done without proper planning processes? If I built a room onto my home I would have been required to have submitted plans and had various aspects examined for approval. How can such a huge project be going ahead without any vital assessments?

Save Our Rail has undertaken more research towards its transport proposals than the Government has done to justify ripping up a rail line.

The plan to cut the city off to revitalise it is a fraudulent rip-off. Newcastle will not wear it. Save Our Rail has strengthened its resolve to fight on behalf of the community to retain its valuable transport link to Newcastle from the Hunter Region and Sydney's tourist potential.

The public has been treated in a very high handed manner with decisions made with no consultation and simply imposed onto the electorate with no evidence of any benefit.

An inquiry has been requested to report on the 5 th March 2014 however the railway will be removed months before hand.

These are decisions which will have profound effects on the lives of many who use the rail services whilst other cities are installing railways Newcastle is going against the trend and removing our rail from a city that is experiencing growth Over that last 50 years the passenger rail has rundown through lack of planning and investment to the present level where it is easier to close the service when it should be expanding to meet future needs.

In view of the lack of planning into the removal of the railway and no suitable replacement being available for many years I request that the closure of our rail be held over until all planning , enquires are completed not before the 5 March 2014 .

Yours faithfully

Robert Tiedeman

24 October 2014.