

**Submission
No 170**

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

Name: Mr Max Phillips

Date received: 23/10/2014

I am commenting on the rail closure only.

Shortly before our local state member appeared before ICAC I wrote to the Premier asking for valid logical arguments in support of closing the railway. I stated that I could come up with no other reason than corruption leading to building on the rail corridor. I said that I hoped I lived long enough to see those responsible appear before ICAC. I received a form letter in reply stating that my letter had been forwarded to the relevant minister. Within weeks my hope was realised re ICAC and we have all seen the result.

Apart from any other reason I submit that because of the number of government members resigning from parliament or the party this government has no mandate to pursue any controversial matters and in particular any in the Newcastle area because of the ICAC findings re the local member and the mayor.

The original reason given for closure was to "open up" the foreshore. The latest announcement re this is that the rail corridor will be built on. This is typical of the misinformation given out during the whole process whereby initially there was "no thought" being given, then "it had been suggested" then "it was a possibility" and so on. This line was just a form of conditioning and generated a lot of cynicism re the original intent. This has resulted in a view by many that closing the line before the mooted tram line is in place will allow the buses to be so "successful" "that the tram will not be needed.

The benefits of the current position go beyond Newcastle. I live near the beach. For a large part of the year there is a stream of beachgoers from the train. These people are from areas outside Newcastle and often include families with strollers and people in wheel chairs.

Apart from the inconvenience a change of transport takes a minimum of twenty minutes. This is probably a conservative estimate.

With the University and Court House being built near Civic and the prospect of trams in Hunter Street there is a recipe for bedlam. This is doubly so with the dearth of parking to be provided at these sites.

A friend of mine is a retired head town planner. He has done surveys at the railway/Stewart Avenue road crossing and found that traffic hold-ups were not significantly affected by the railway. The main causes are the three sets of lights in a short distance together with the small right hand turn lane north of the crossing.

There have been sensible suggestions re extra pedestrian crossings and the planting of trees/shrubs.

I am still waiting to be told a sensible, valid reason to close the line.

We are on the way to having no farm left to sell.

Max Cooper.