

**Submission
No 150**

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 20/10/2014

Partially Confidential

I have lived in Newcastle for 10 years, I have raised my young family here.

Newcastle is a steadily growing city, full of potential. I have seen many projects become a reality in my time here. Progress is good.

It is my honest opinion that the Hunter Chapter of the Property Council of NSW have had an undue influence over elected representatives in recent times. I have monitored the media discourse recently and it is quite simply a small group of influential property owners that seek to create an overheated property market in Newcastle to their advantage. The recent decisions to remove the rail line and build residential towers in the Hunter Street Mall have been tainted by the undue influence of special interests. This is not the Australian way.

I admit that I personally rely on the train as do my children, my teenage daughters will be especially disadvantaged.

One of the stated reasons for rail truncation is the reported low patronage on the line. One of the big reasons for low numbers (the committee may or may not know) is due to a free bus service that exists in Newcastle CBD that competes with the rail service. I believe the transport minister has made statements to the effect that this free bus service will also cease due to the implementation of the Opal card.

The existing free bus service along Hunter street enables the suburban services to move along the long stretch of Hunter Street quicker than usual as the driver is not required to check tickets or sell tickets. This has been a positive and efficient use of state resources and has made Newcastle CBD an attractive place for business and speeds up bus journeys for those who need to commute between suburbs and the CBD.

Local retailers who complain about trade in the CBD in my opinion need to look at the larger retail sector across the nation (and the globe). Retailing is a difficult balance in the current economic environment. Unfortunately, lobbyists such as the Property Council and the Club of 13 look to removing a useful and existing public transport system that belong to the people of NSW in a vain attempt to prop up their out dated business models.

The recent ICAC Operation Spicer transcripts tell us much about these unhealthy relationships.

Thank you,