

**Submission
No 114**

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

Name: Mr Geoff Smith

Date received: 21/10/2014

The Director,

21 – 10 – 14

Select Committee on the Planning Process in the Newcastle and broader Hunter Region

Parliament House

Macquarie St

Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

I am writing to you about the government's decision to close the heavy rail line between Wickam and Newcastle, and its possible replacement by light rail.

The decision to close the line is completely compromised by the disclosure of wide spread corruption in the Newcastle area. The Mayor, now resigned in disgrace, and a vigorous supporter of the closure, has described himself as an "automatic teller machine". What confidence can taxpayers have that the decision to close the existing line is not tainted by corruption?

The decision to close and dismantle this line so flies in the face of logic and current city planning principals, that a reasonable person would assume the decision to do so was influenced by corrupt payments.

Are there are any beneficiaries to this closure apart from the developers, and are the developers are making any contribution to the cost (apart from illegal under the table payments)

I understand that the land the railway is built on is more valuable the surrounding land in that it has not been undermined by coal mining. If the railway is to be closed and removed what is going to happen to the land? Is it to be sold to developers or retained for the public good.

Why is the government spending billions of dollars constructing heavy rail in Sydney at the same time planning to dismantle heavy rail in Newcastle?

I understand that the budget for the replacement light rail, if it is ever built, is in the region of \$350M to \$450M. If this money is to be used to benefit the taxpayers of NSW and in particular Newcastle, it would be much better spent improving the Sydney – Newcastle line.

If you want to spend serious money in the Newcastle area, there is the long talked about Fassifern – Teralba deviation, which would not only benefit Sydney - Newcastle travellers but also passengers and freight travelling to the North Coast and North West of the state.

...../2

Other projects that need to be looked at are the installation of high speed crossovers and bidirectional signalling, particularly between Hawkesbury River and Gosford. Also there is a need for centre third road bi directional passing lanes to be constructed at suitable locations at reasonable cost. (As distinct from the gold plated loops being installed at Gosford at present.)

One project that could be undertaken at reasonable cost is the realignment of turnouts at West Ryde, Epping, Hornsby and Berowra where stopping local trains take the straight unrestricted route and express and through trains take the speed restricted diverging track.

Regards

Geoff Smith

.