

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 23/10/2014

Partially Confidential

20 October 2014

The Director

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

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir or Madam,

Newcastle Railway Station is a central point for visitors to Newcastle its foreshore, beaches, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, accommodation and the state heritage listed Coal River precinct which includes: The Convict Lumberyard, Fort Scratchley, Macquarie Pier and the Nobbys Headland.

It is imperative that passenger rail services be maintained and promoted to Newcastle Railway Station. Ironically there has never any promotion of the value of rail service to Newcastle. Even though rail transport has the potential to encourage increasing numbers of people directly into the city from the Hunter Valley hinterland, from the Central Coast and the Sydney Region.

It is also the most interesting way to enter Newcastle with the active harbour on one side and the historic city 'Old Town' on the other and grandeur of Victorian Italianate railway station terminal with a unique sense of place.

Interestingly Newcastle had the first rail facility in the colony of N.S.W. It was used to move coal to the wharves by the AA Company. Newcastle also had the earliest rail passenger service in New South Wales from Newcastle to Maitland, which opened in 1857 / 1858. It was opened as

the Great Northern Railway and has operated continuously since that time.

The last regular government steam-hauled passenger service in Australia operated between Singleton and Newcastle on the 24 July 1971, behind steam locomotive 3246.

The Wran Government completed the electrification of the Gosford to Newcastle railway in 1984. Restoring the exterior of the gracious Newcastle Railway Station which was officially opened by the Premier Mr Wran. The former railway carriage yards became a Foreshore Park in 1988.

The railway into Newcastle was overhauled around 2010 with cement sleepers and possibly new rails, suburban stations had platforms extended and Newcastle Railway Station exterior was repaired and repainted. It believed this cost about \$20 million from the media at the time.

The Hunter Region won a community campaign to retain the railway into Newcastle Railway Station in 1995, to be now told the closure date on 26 December 2014, is only days before some large scale community events in Newcastle that are held in the Newcastle East Foreshore Park, adjacent to Historic Newcastle Railway Station.

- 1) The New Year's Eve celebrations where an outdoor concert in Newcastle East Foreshore Park and fireworks display, attracting large crowds who encourage travelling by public transport on December 31.
- 2) The National Maritime Festival which is held on Australia Day January 26 also utilises the Newcastle East Foreshore Park for displays and Newcastle Harbour for maritime activities. Families have picnics, again attracting large crowds from out of area visitors, who travelled into the Newcastle by double deck electric trains or rail cars because some of the roads are closed. Also a Heritage Express train brings Sydney citizens to the day events.
- 3) The City of Maitland is proud to preserve their historic heritage buildings combined with lush landscapes, has the popular Hunter Valley Steamfest Festival in April, another large scale weekend event which involves Newcastle e.g. former 'Newcastle Express' steam locomotive 3265 'Hunter' ran six shuttles to Newcastle from

Maitland during the 2014 Steamfest, bringing many visitors to Newcastle.

- 4) Sporting events like Newcastle Surf fest Festival at the nearby beaches, Football matches require extra trains for people to attend the activities.

Newcastle 'Old Town' is also a tourist destination for out of area organisations with the 'Newcastle Flyer' re-enactments with the 'Newcastle Flyer' steam locomotives 3801 and 3830. Very popular Rail and Sail excursions have been organised by the New South Wales Rail Transport Museum, with Port Stephens whale watching excursions and 3801 Limited.

Recently, Transport Heritage NSW / Heritage Express Rail Tours had a Newcastle City Steam Weekend in October 2014, where about 3000 commuters travelled on short shuttles. Heritage Express Rail Tours has the 'Steam to Surf' excursions to Wollongong while Newcastle Railway Station is closer to the beaches than Wollongong.

Fremantle has a harbourside Railway Station and hundreds of restored ornate heritage buildings and when visitors arrive they often compare Newcastle to Fremantle.

Another City, another opinion – Maitland Mercury has been running a series of 'Get on Board: Save Hunter Rail' articles and news polls with the major community in support of retaining the railway into Newcastle Railway Station which is a regional issue.

The proposed Light Rail route abandoned the jewel in the crown - Newcastle Railway Station. The community are not informed of its future. The announcement of bus services from Broadmeadow or Hamilton to Newcastle will become the slowest journey into the Newcastle 'CBD'.

The railway to historic Newcastle Railway Station must be maintained for its everyday commuting public, because it is an essential feature of Newcastle's unique character and a focus for many of the City's cultural activities and retaining the 157year's railway connection between Newcastle and Maitland.

Regards,

(Attached are some photographs of the crowds that rode on the Newcastle City Steam Weekend in October 2014).