

**Submission
No 80**

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

Name: Mrs Helen Sharrock

Date received: 19/10/2014

20th October 2014
Submission to Reverend Fred Nile
Re: Newcastle's revitalisation

I am a resident of Newcastle inner city and wish to strongly object to the proposed amendment of building heights in the heritage city area and the truncation of the rail service.

The proposed plan submitted by UrbanGrowthNSW and GPT to build three high rise towers in the inner city area is dramatically different from the previous 2012 plans in relation to heights of buildings. The plan was only on display for 16 days. There was no consultation with the communities most affected. No attention has been paid to the significant heritage values in areas immediately south of this development.

For example, in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, the following planning principles appear on their website: "In general new tall buildings should not be sited within conservation areas, nor should they visually impinge on the setting of/or important views of listed buildings or conservation areas. This particularly applies to the backdrops of groups of historic buildings or the visual envelope surrounding single buildings such as churches. In areas adjoining conservation areas where new tall buildings may be appropriate, tall buildings should, in general, relate well to the unique urban grain, visual axes, general context, sense of place, and topography of the surrounding conservation areas, and this should be tested through detailed character and impact assessment."

This extract demonstrates proper planning principles and should be adopted by Department of Planning NSW and Newcastle City Council.

Newcastle is the third oldest city in Australia and has significant heritage, townscape and landscape values which deserves to be protected from inappropriate developments.

The low to medium density buildings within the existing building height rules are preferred development guidelines for new residential, business, retail and entertainment developments.

Anything above the existing 2012 buildings height limits should be built at Newcastle West the new CBD area and Wickham transport interchange as shown on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy Plan 2012. Newcastle west area does not have significant heritage landscape (topography) and will not visually impinge on the setting of/or important views of heritage listed buildings, the iconic Newcastle Christchurch Cathedral.

Since moving to Newcastle 3 years ago there has been exciting revitalisation happening of the inner city with new cafes, wine bars, restaurants, shops and galleries. Young creatives and businesses have invested their talents and money already in new ventures in the inner city. Renew Newcastle has created and installed many new projects in the inner city. We do not want high rise and glitzy shopping mall Gold Coast type developments. We have only one chance to make sure Newcastle grows and develops as a celebrated vibrant heritage city that has an enviable relaxed lifestyle.

Fremantle in Western Australia had similar threats in the 1980's it is now a vibrant and a very fine example of a beautiful heritage city with a university and working harbour which has respected it's heritage values with appropriate developments and kept the train service operating.

Who says that 15 to 20 storey high rise buildings are the only options to increase residential accommodation in this unique Newcastle city centre? The residential developments which have been and are currently being built within the current height restrictions are providing more residential accommodation in the city centre.

The Government announced recently that the rail line will be truncated to Broadmeadow on December 26. A Newcastle Herald survey showed that the majority of Newcastle residents do not want the rail line cut. It appears that only the business chambers want this. They want to dictate what is best for the city. They assert that this will allow the city to redevelop. It is already doing that with many new businesses in shops and a number of home units blocks recently approved.

I reside in Newcastle city and use the train service to travel to Sydney and then the airport line to the domestic and international terminals. Newcastle station is important for all residents in the Hunter Valley. It is especially important to young people who travel from the upper hunter and Maitland to spend a day at the beach and hang out.

A recent study by the Newcastle Youth Council in partnership with Newcastle City Council "Newcastle at Night, Young People and Night Time Economy" published February 2014, found that 18 - 25 year olds want more trains and buses and taxis in the CBD, not less!

It is unbelievable that a government would remove infrastructure which works well and replace rail with buses which create traffic congestion, do not offer easy access for the disabled and elderly. Buses are too high to step into with a large suitcase and nobody to assist. I walk with my suitcase to Newcastle station to travel to Sydney which has easy access and there is staff to assist if required. The station has a kiosk to purchase refreshments and comfortable platform seating whilst waiting to meet and greet visitors.

With the government's proposed changes I will have to wait at a bus stop (which has no shelter) with my heavy suitcase to go to Broadmeadow station to get on a train to Sydney. I understand there are at least 12 sets of traffic lights between Broadmeadow station and Newcastle station.

This will add probably another 45 minutes to my journey. This is definitely not progress! If I need to drive to Broadmeadow station, parking will be a significant problem, especially if I park for more than one day. A major reason I moved to Newcastle city is because of the ability for me to walk to Newcastle station to travel to Sydney.

If the government showed proper planning process and conducted extensive community consultation, the light rail would be installed first before removing the existing rail.

It is unbelievable that a government would remove rail when local public transport requirements will be increased by a new courthouse being built, with an increasing number of cases to be heard and a new city University campus when there is an existing railway station at Civic which services these two developments and connects to the University's main Callahan campus, the Newcastle Museum, Honeysuckle Harbour foreshore restaurant precinct, the City Hall, Civic Theatre, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Newcastle Conservatorium, Civic Park etc.

Another important fact is the Newcastle railway station provides easy access to significant tourism sites, heritage precincts, Customs house, famous surf beaches, Nobbys lighthouse site where cottages have recently been restored and open for business, Fort Scratchly, restaurants, museums and galleries and the harbour foreshore.

Tourism is growing in Newcastle. It is already a popular destination and visitation will increase. Providing good transport links and connections is integral for the inner city, coast and the upper hunter and Sydney.

I do not agree with putting more buses on roads to replace trains, these will congest the roads more, create more pollution and noise, when we already have an existing rail transport corridor.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Helen Sharrock