

**Submission
No 175**

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

Name: Ms Paula Morrow

Date received: 23/10/2014

Urban Growth NSW - Design Newcastle forum

‘UrbanGrowth NSW has announced a two-pronged consultation approach with the community, with a summit planned for Saturday, July 26 and Sunday, July 27.’

I attended this forum on the Sunday. My friend Jeane Gravalin had received invitations for both days but could only go on the Saturday so I rang the organisers and went on the Sunday in her place.

Jeane said that all attenders on the Saturday had been given \$150 cash which I thought was questionable for a start.

Very early in the program on Sunday I tried to get retaining the railway into Newcastle on to the agenda but that was refused, even though I pointed out that a recent NBN poll had shown that 80% of the citizens of Newcastle wanted to keep the heavy rail right into Newcastle Station.

The whole day mainly consisted of speakers telling us what was to be done to our city.

It was certainly not a consultation, except for the parts where we were invited to put our ideas up on a wall and also to place icons on maps to show where we would like services. These were not serious attempts to get our feedback and could not have been used as such.

The whole process was just like everything else the government wants to do to Newcastle, and entirely ignores the social, financial and environmental wellbeing, let alone wishes, of the people of NSW’s second city.

When Pru Goward and Gladys Berejiklian speak on the radio in their honeyed voices, they always congratulate themselves on the consultation that has been done with the community. I consider that to be totally dishonest, unless they consider the whole community to consist of developers and other people who are trying to make a lot of money out of destroying what has been said to be, by Lonely Planet and many others, one of the most special cities in the world.

The following is an article that I have written on this issue:

They are about to cut the rail service to one of the best destinations in the world.

This will castrate Newcastle which is Australia’s sixth city, if you don’t count the Gold Coast and I don’t.

At the cost of \$470 million the state government intends to cut the last two stations into the city so that a few developers can make huge profits, at great cost to the community in several ways.

Historic Newcastle station, the existing arrival point, is centred within the beautiful working harbour, charming old buildings, the fantastic Nobby’s Beach and Lighthouse, and Newcastle CBD.

This means major social and ecological catastrophe for the city, and this sort of vandalism now radiates out to affect the whole world.

The NSW government say they will replace the service to these last two stations with light rail. But do we trust them? Will it work? Have they planned it first? No, no and no!

Our government is destroying the people's infrastructure with the people's money: hundreds of millions of dollars for the slashing, and a huge amount more IF the proposed alternative is then built.

Who wants to get off one mode of transport unnecessarily with the bags, baby, wheelchair, bike or surfboard and wait to clamber on another? For the last two stations? Studies around the world show that nobody does.

In 2014, taking a big kick at beneficial services containing much embedded energy because of the materials and work that have gone into them, and pushing more traffic on to the roads, has an environmental impact on our world like destroying a forest.

It is not as if there are no better plans. We want to landscape the existing rail and slow the trains down for the last couple of stations with more pedestrian and vehicle crossings.

The Eco Transit group maintains that for less money than that postulated for cutting the service, we could iron out the kinks in the Newcastle-Sydney service and get that journey down to under two hours, from the existing nearly three hours that most trains take.

Any ADDITIONAL public transport systems and routes would be favourably looked at by the community.

Paula Morrow, eco-writer.