

**Submission
No 259**

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

Name: Mr Giles Martin

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This is a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region. I am making it on my own behalf, and not on behalf of any organisations that I belong to.

I am particularly concerned about the processes leading to the decision to truncate the railway line to Newcastle, and replace it with light rail going down Hunter Street. The basic problem is that the general public has never seen a business case for this decision. We have only been given vague generalities about how it will link the city with the harbour and “revitalise” Newcastle.

What we really need is a cost-benefit analysis of this proposal, and of the alternatives that have been publicly discussed, such as putting the heavy rail underground between Hamilton and Newcastle, or adding more level crossings between Hamilton and Newcastle. Part of the analysis would be the impact on public-transport usage in Newcastle: Would more or fewer people use the possible alternatives? Would car usage increase or decrease? If car usage increases, where will people park?

My personal view is that public transport use will go down if the Newcastle line is truncated, because any alternative (including light rail) will be less convenient. My view also is that (given a decision to truncate the railway line), building light rail is not justified, because there will not be enough users, and it will make Hunter Street more congested for other users

However, these are just my gut feelings. What I, and other members of the public, need to see in an analysis of the impact of this decision, together with the estimated cost. Only with such an analysis can we intelligently comment on the proposal.

What I fear most is that the state government has made no such cost-benefit analysis, or (it it has) the cost-benefit analysis does not justify the decision. I hope that the Select Committee can find out what lies behind the decision, and reveal the justification (if any) to the public.

Giles Martin