

>>> Veronica Antcliff <v.antcliff@telluricresearch.com> 19-02-2013 11:59 pm >>>

I write to add my voice to those of the Save Our Rail members and supporters who attended the rally outside Parliament House in Sydney today. As the rally was held on a weekday it was not possible for me to attend.

(As I write this the Premier and Leader of the Opposition in W.A. are engaged in a debate being televised on ABC 24 and both are promising to build more rail lines)

Ripping up a valuable piece of public transport infrastructure up that gives people from the Hunter Valley and west Lake Macquarie, the Central Coast and Sydney access to Newcastle CBD, foreshore and beaches, connects the two campuses of Newcastle University, and gives the increasing population of inner city Newcastle access to places outside Newcastle, makes no sense whatsoever (except to developers who want to get their hands on the land). The railway line is not a barrier - in fact it gives people access to a wide variety of destinations without the need to provide parking for private motor vehicles. More pram, bicycle and wheelchair friendly pedestrian overpasses (a much cheaper solution) would solve the supposed barrier problem.

My husband and I regularly commute between Scone and Newcastle as one of us works in Scone and the other works in Newcastle and we maintain residences in both places (the Newcastle residence being closest to Newcastle Station). The train is the quickest, cheapest, most environmentally friendly travel option and it allows us to make best use of our time as we can work or read while travelling. Being forced to change modes at Wickham would be a serious inconvenience.

Proponents of the Wickham interchange claim that it would lead to a greater variety of onward travelling bus or light rail options. However these can just as easily be provided from the existing interchange at Newcastle Station. I note that travelling by train between Wickham and Newcastle is much quicker than travelling by bus.

Rather than wasting money removing and downgrading existing public transport facilities in Newcastle and inconveniencing people by forcing them to needlessly change modes, this money would be spent on building bigger tunnels on the North West Rail Link so that it can take double decker trains thereby removing the necessity for passengers to change trains if travelling beyond Chatswood (although that at least is just a matter of crossing a platform rather than changing modes). That would be a win-win with two groups of passengers not being required to change vehicles in order to complete their journeys.

Alternatively the money that is proposed to be wasted removing valuable public transport infrastructure in Newcastle could be used to provide more public transport services elsewhere - more infrastructure or more rolling stock (e.g. more trains on the Hunter Valley line)

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Veronica Antcliff
100 Barton St,
Scone, 2337, NSW, Australia
email: v.antcliff@telluricresearch.com
phone: (02) 6545 9574

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