

urbanrenewal - Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy feedback

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To: <urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au>
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Subject: Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy feedback

1. Thank you for offering an attractive and well presented plan to giving our Newcastle the boost it desperately craves.

Tonight I attended the public consultation event in Newcastle City Hall. Apart from the consistent argument from the audience that the rail line should remain, overall everyone seemed very positive about what was being presented. The only way to keep everyone happy would be to make the rail line underground. Taking the railway off the streets will open up the lifestyle benefits further and give the place a unique European city feel, similar to regional cities found in Italy, Spain and Greece.

Many lay people recognise the demand for tickets to ride trains all the way to Newcastle doesn't match the greater demand for decisive action in the development of Newcastle.

Newcastle has been starved of action for decades. The strength of passion associated with the differing opinions in Newcastle is testament to that. The benefits on offer from the Newcastle Urban Renewal Plan could easily be relabelled the Greater Newcastle and Regional NSW Psychological Renewal plan – as that will be the effect of this.

When you compare Australian regional cities to UK regional towns, there are many similarities in regard to the societies but having let things stall in Newcastle for so long is a regret that all involved should feel.

2. The Hunter Development Corporation (HDC) was formerly the Honeysuckle Development Corporation (HDC). The Honeysuckle development has taken TOO LONG. It was supposed to only take 10 years but it took 25 years to get part the way there where it is today.

Why didn't Cockle Bay take 25 years?

Why didn't Canary Wharf in London take 25 years?

Why is it OK for the transformation of Newcastle by the HDC to be now taking 50 years, and counting?

Recommendation for action - Please ensure that decisive action is regularly taken over the coming 25 years. Rapid quick wins need to be implemented in the next five years to create confidence in the public. Confidence in the public is the most powerful tool that can be easily be sparked to drive the success of the project. All it takes is rapid decisive action that achieves tangible results.

3. Following the community consultation tonight I was then left to try and catch a bus. The bus timetable was completely different to the buses that were travelling at that time. Buses that were either 30 minutes over due or early were passing by. Updating bus timetables at bus stops doesn't cost any more than what it does now to maintain them. Leaving them out of date in a transport-challenged town like Newcastle is culpable. It took me 1 hour from the time I left the NSW Planning presentation at Newcastle City Hall to find a cab that got me home – a trip that in a car would take 10 minutes.

Recommendation for action – Please ensure all bus timetables are current.

4. You will need a lot more money than \$120 million over 25 years to deliver the strategic vision.

Why make the project \$120 million, not \$50 million and not \$1.2 billion? E.g. What role does the funding have with the Store site?

Why 25 years, not 10 years and not 30 years?

Recommendation for action - The answers to these questions need to be explained in the next round of public planning documents and exhibitions please.

5. What is the prioritised list of the different initiatives? In what order will the initiatives in the plan be implemented?

Recommendation for action - prioritise the 'place experiences'. This will create confidence that action is taking place and a new Newcastle is achievable.

6. Much of the plan relies on crowds of people returning to Newcastle for a variety of reasons.

How do we get large employers based in Newcastle?

Is there private investment interests indicating they will invest further once this is implemented, what feedback have you had from the business community?

The plan needing people is correct. Newcastle steel works had 20, 000 people who turned up for work for most of the 20th century, and there were about 5, 000 staff, patients and visitors who once visited the Royal Newcastle Hospital. Take away these workers from central Newcastle and the demand for services that their families created, means we are staring at a gapping legacy hole.

In my experience – when Newcastle is compared internationally it proves to be an

outstanding lifestyle choice for talented or family-oriented people who can find a good job in Newcastle.

Recommendation for action – that part of the budget is used for attracting large employers to base their offices in Newcastle.

7. There is a chicken and egg situation in regard to employers in Newcastle who say they have good paying jobs but can't find the talented workers, and workers who get sick of the challenges of finding suitable employment in Newcastle and then leave for other parts of Australia.

Therefore the plan is correct in attracting and retaining workers by making the environment more attractive to live and work in.

8. The role of regional cities is to take the burden off stretched resources in major cities. Newcastle airport is well documented and known to have been built in a way that can cheaply be converted to being an international airport. International airports in the world create jobs and communities, like how railway stations created them in the 19th century. It is an achievable approach to supporting the demand for work and the supply of city workers, and would take the burden off the rest of Australia's buckling metro cities.

Recommendation for action - Make Newcastle airport an international airport

The road to Stockton takes 25 minutes to drive from Newcastle. It would take two minutes if there was a tunnel from Newcastle to Stockton. There is a ferry but it's an infrequent timetable. Developing residential and business land along the coast of Stockton beach between Stockton and Nelson Bay is possibly the most sensible and lucrative decision that any Australian Government could make. If motor traffic could travel to Stockton from Newcastle it would underline Newcastle's importance to the country and create a huge surge in demand for goods and services in Newcastle again.

Recommendation for action - Build a traffic tunnel from Newcastle to Stockton and develop the prime land between Newcastle and Nelson Bay.

Finally, the population of NSW is too Sydney-centric. More needs to be done to disperse the population to areas like Newcastle. Australia is such a huge country with such a small population compared to other large countries. It's not sustainable. I think more relaxed laws on skilled immigration would be beneficial for our economy and should be motivated by increasing the population of regional cities like Newcastle.

Recommendation for action - Campaign for increased population of Newcastle via more

relaxed immigration laws.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Best regards

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