

45 Parry St
Cooks Hill 2300
19th April 2013

The Manager
Centres and Urban Renewal
Department of Planning
urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Manager,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.

I am a long term resident of the city of Newcastle, living close to the inner city since 1969. I remember when the Mall was built and how much we loved it; then the approval and construction of several shopping malls occurred and the inner city started to decay. I have studied and taught architecture as a component of the HSC Visual Arts course and from 1999 to 2004 I was a Newcastle City Councillor. During this time council developed DCP for East and DCP for West and made various changes to these over the years.

In 2002 I made a study of land values over the previous 5 previous valuations. This showed a steep rise following the Newcastle Earthquake and then no significant rise from there. While many things impact on valuations the rail has been a constant and I believe that it is wrong to suggest that the rail is a negative impact on city redevelopment.

The Department of Planning must quantify the negative impact that they believe that the presence of heavy rail has had, as a direct connection to and from the City of Newcastle to region that calls Newcastle their capital. This must happen during this period of the planning and be based on hard evidence.

It is stated in the report that the rail corridor will be kept in public hands. What part of the current rail land is "rail corridor"? Does it include for example parking areas provided for the staff who works at the stations and on the trains? Does the Department of Planning through the Hunter Development Corporation own key blocks of land that are ancillary to the operation of the heavy rail? Will the bus depot on prime real estate on the north of the Station be kept like other parcels of land in case there is the option one day to put in place the light rail option fancied by Tim Owen MP as a candidate for the state seat of Newcastle?

Light Rail proposals require land outside the running area of the light rail vehicles for passenger services on/off, tickets, toilets, waiting areas etc. Will the State Government protect these parcels of land for such a future use? This is not indicated in any of the plans.

The suburbs of Redcliffe in Brisbane and Bondi in Sydney have similarlies to Newcastle in that they are both sea side attractors at holiday time. Both Redcliffe and Bondi failed to achieve a direct connection by rail. Both have high car ownership although in the case of Bondi not many people move their cars as they won't get a park when they go home. Redcliffe on the peninsula north of Brisbane has been asking for direct rail connections since they finally achieved a bridge (Hornibrook Hwy bridge); Bondi was to get a rail link but it only goes as far as Bondi Junction. Without a direct rail connections visitors to Bondi and residents alike find it impossible to park during summer. Is this NSW Planning gift to Our City? It is hard enough to park now.

I have the following comments/questions on the plan.

New Planning controls

Question: How will these controls contribute enough funds to create the opportunities described which are far beyond the total of \$120m? Section 94? Valuations are based on land value and any changes will take time to show increases in NCC land rates and State Government land tax.

Funding of this project will take funds from other areas of Newcastle and the lower Hunter, despite A Cornwell MP comments in Newcastle Herald 18th April. In the past there have been collaborative approaches to projects in common eg Glendale Athletics Track as a regional facility; ripping out the rail is not a creation but a removal of a regional facility. Funds have already been removed from this area in the area of Public Health and Public Education; now it is Public Transport's turn.

The plans show 8 new crossings of the rail corridor

Comment: **Some of these should be trialled now with the rail in place!** Could save a lot of \$'s.

Comment: **The Darby Street proposed crossing should be pedestrian only** so that it does not impact on the revitalisation that has already happened in this street due to the raising of the road widening scheme in the late 1990's. You should not revitalise one area and impact negatively on one that has "revitalised" itself.

Comment: **The Cottage Creek proposed crossing should be an opportunity for reconciliation.** I have written before to the Department of Planning on this in connection to land on the Harbour. There is no mention in this report of the particular history of this site; the first people in this area camped around this part of the Harbour "where the fresh water meets the sea" = food and fresh water. There is evidence in the Ibis and the KFC nearby.

And increased travel options.

Comment: There have been **many studies that show that this "travel option"** to change travel modes so close to your destination could have an interesting and **time wasting consequences**. Many business are centred around Newcastle Station; don't "revitalise" Wickham at the expense of City East!

Birdwood park "Key green space"

Comment: unless there are plans to increase this space by adding King St to it and other lands to the North and make it front Hunter Street by rezoning and removing building, the Park is far too small to be ever more than a once lovely park cut in half by a four lane highway. A better way to spend funds would be to develop the passive recreation areas of National Park which is in the near vicinity and suffering from over-exposure to sports.

Wheeler Place makeover

Comment: The illustrations show palm trees covering our lovely open square right next to the Civic Theatre and City Hall, created by the Newcastle City Council at great expense by removal of a key two storey building. This would make the square useless for events, tents etc. Rethink this one as it is not broken.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Eade