



PO Box 630
Milsons Point NSW 1565

Manager
Centres and Urban Renewal
Department Planning and Infrastructure
GPO BOX 39
SYDNEY 2001

SUBMISSION ON THE NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL
STRATEGY – CLOSURE OF THE NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE.

Urban renewal is important for the Newcastle's CBD. Currently it is an area of falling property values and is not utilised to its full potential.

Revitalising the Newcastle CBD is important, but the belief that it can only be revitalised by closing and removing the railway line is a myth. The removal of the line will only further lead to the CBD's decline. The one thing that any CBD relies on for its vitality is people and to remove one of the main ways people access the area, the railway, is short sighted and will only diminish the CBD as a destination.

The closure of the line to Newcastle will not only affect the residents of the city, it will also affect people living in the Hunter Region and all people visiting Newcastle by train.

Trains to and from Sydney will be forced to terminate at Broadmeadow due to the lack of sufficient platforms at the proposed terminus of Wickham. This will result in passengers travelling from stations to the west of Newcastle having no direct connection with Sydney bound trains. It will necessitate passengers in having to catch a bus from Wickham to Broadmeadow to continue their journey onward to Sydney!

Consequently, passengers journey time could be increased by more than 30 minutes and be a disincentive to use public transport.

To aid in the revitalisation of the Newcastle CBD, the railway should be retained and services enhanced to attract more people to the area. Cutting the rail line will have the reverse affect and will lead to commerce and business leaving the CBD.

To fully revitalise the CBD, serious consideration should be given to introducing light rail to link the centre of Newcastle to the southern and western suburbs, to augment the rail service.

If the Government were serious about the revitalisation of the Newcastle CBD, they would not be closing the rail line and would be seeking to improve access for commuters, tourists and shoppers.

In summary, EcoTransit opposes the closure of the Newcastle railway line, as it will have the reverse affect of what the Government claims and will only lead to the further deterioration of the CBD. It will also affect passengers travelling from the Hunter to Sydney by eliminating the direct connection between Hunter rail services and Newcastle to Sydney services.

This proposal illustrates a lack of commitment to public transport, by the Government. Around the world, governments are building rail lines into the CBDs of cities to provide public transport access. It is a backward and retrograde step to close an existing line that provides the valuable service of linking the Newcastle CBD to the Hunter Region and to Sydney.