

40 McMichael Street
Maryville 2293

The Manager
Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy
Department of Planning, NSW.

Dear Madam/Sir

I have been studying your publication "Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy" 2012 and do agree that Newcastle City needs rejuvenation and certainly some redevelopment. At the moment Marcus Westbury's initiatives have had a very positive affect on inner Newcastle and Islington, mainly through the efforts of creative young persons. The Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) raises many questions and provides very little detail, so my comments will have to be just as sketchy.

Firstly, **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM** - the heavy rail line into Newcastle. I am alarmed that the Minister for Transport has not been included in the discussions for the removal of this rail line, as I was under the impression from discussions with her some time ago that she was very interested in being consulted on this matter.

Frankly, the plan to remove successful rail and replace it with buses is so passé that I have trouble believing that any competent person would propose this. The problem is that yesterday's men, two in particular, have had enormous sway in this matter, to the detriment of Newcastle. I believe that the population in NSW (including Newcastle) is reasonably sophisticated and does not want to be dictated to about inept and polluting forms of transport. They want more rail and light rail. Buses are for the bits in between and should never be seen as an actual alternative to rail. Newcastle runs into a peninsular and using extra buses along Hunter Street from Wickham will result in a "sewer" similar to George Street, Sydney.

The other issue is that there are several big developers (including the Mayor of Newcastle) who own vast amounts of property in Newcastle City and Wickham and they want to develop their landholdings **at any cost to the community** and then call it progress.

The railway line is a great plus for Newcastle but it needs to be improved in appearance. I think that with a bit of good will from the developer lobby & Newcastle Mayor the rail can be improved and development proceed. What is wrong with building over the rail line? It is the only land in Newcastle which has not been mined and would not be too expensive to build on but I suppose it might "dirty" some of the developers' view lines from the proposed "resort style development" of blocks of high rise flats.

An example of a successful interchange in Sydney is Chatswood, where the air space over the railway line is not wasted. Mind you, it is not particularly lovely. Melbourne has railway lines running along the Yarra bank under “The Shed” at Princes Bridge and Flinders Street Station. This arrangement works and looks good. A bit of lateral thinking there.

The plan also shows that Railway Street, Wickham will disappear. I suppose this is to assist with a proposed bus terminal. This closure will force traffic to Wickham, Maryville and Tighes Hill to use Industrial Highway or drive/walk up Maitland Road to Shedden Street to access their destinations. This is appalling traffic planning. Get out the map and have a look. Would you like to walk so far?

There is worse to come. If the plan is changed yet again to terminate rail at Broadmeadow, what are the passengers from Maitland to do? Their train does not divert to Broadmeadow but stops at Hamilton, Wickham and Newcastle. They will be appallingly inconvenienced having already done the Park and Ride at Maitland.

Alternatively, there seems to be a scheme to block off Beaumont Street, Hamilton to support some interchange @ Broadmeadow/Hamilton. There is to be some sort of foot bridge over Maitland Road, Islington and the mind boggles about how people and businesses in Islington and Hamilton will survive this crass decision. Hamilton and Islington are the nearest shopping centres to Tighes Hill and Maryville and they should be allowed to succeed.

Second, **THE OTHER ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.** Wickham has been selected to be the “commercial”/“mixed use” area of Newcastle. The plan and photos seem to suggest that the development will be of considerable density and height with lots of overshadowing. This style of development can cause dreadful wind tunnels and, with the location so close to the ocean and galeforce winds, this could be a very unpleasant location to be in, whether domestic or commercial.

Don’t forget people actually live happily in Wickham, apart from bikie gangs and associated crimes. There are also rather strange industries here and there. Where are these to go in the scheme of things? The next-door suburb of Maryville certainly does not want any dodgy bikie and/or other industries pushed into its streets, which are 99% residential. Keep the brothels and bikies out of our suburbs. Open a special area in Newcastle City for the prostitution industry so that it can be easily policed and drug dealers kept out of the scene.

We have had a long and sordid battle with freelance prostitution in Islington (and Islington Park can still be a pickup spot). Islington Park is a very pleasant family friendly location and the citizens have worked hard to achieve this.

How are the citizens from Maryville and Wickham North going to access the proposed railway terminal at Wickham? I would like to hear your suggestions. N.B. The bus services around here only run in daylight hours, not on Sundays or public holidays, and the service is **hourly**. No wonder people stick to cars.

Third, **THE FINANCIAL ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.** A few years ago the sum of seven million dollars (approx.) was quoted for the railway line removal. To most of us in Newcastle this seems to be an atrocious waste of money. The Newcastle URS does not seem to have any funding for any new infrastructure for Newcastle. The Planning and Infrastructure Minister has not, as far as we know, issued any technical, financial or social reason for removing the rail from Newcastle to Wickham. However, there has been massive pressure from Developers and, as is allowed in Australia (but not in France) possibly donations to the party in power at the moment, in the expectation of preference at all costs. Please note that I am not a member of any political party but, as is normal in an older person and ex public servant, I have a very well developed B.S. indicator.

Finally, Newcastle needs good infrastructure, sensitive redevelopment and a transport system that works (rail), not just buses.

Yours faithfully

(Mrs) Noelle Egeressy