

urbanrenewal - Newcastle rail

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Subject: Newcastle rail

As resident of inner east Newcastle, I wish to comment on the NSW cabinet decision to remove the rail line into Newcastle CBD. The rail line into Newcastle east is a major infrastructure which could be of greater benefit to the city if built up and improved (certainly not removed). Rail services to the rapidly-growing commuter towns of Maitland, Branxton, Singleton and Dungog etc need to be improved in quality and quantity to bring in the predicted increase in working population in a renewed Newcastle CBD. The rail services Newcastle to Sydney also need to be improved, not only for Newcastle residents (again predicted to increase) but to remove cars from the roads and freeways, to bring tourists to Newcastle easily (and cheaply) and to demonstrate yours is a government of vision.

I applaud the aims and content of the renew Newcastle plans, in particular the Guiding principles, Economic initiatives and plans to reuse heritage buildings. However, the proposed transport initiatives of the strategy will not allow Renew Newcastle to succeed, because people will not tolerate changing from trains onto buses, which are a second-rate and cost ineffective option, as many studies have proven. Buses are dirty, polluting, unreliable and a major cause of traffic congestion, let alone being environmentally unsound. People avoid using them and without people coming into the city centre, then the renewal strategy cannot succeed. It is known that trains transport people 20 times more efficiently than buses.

I consider a transport hub, located west of Wickham station, to be a positive and good part of the strategic plan **as long as** this hub acts as the main bus terminal with large car parking areas. All buses going from and to outer lying suburbs into the CBD would terminate here and no longer run in parallel to the rail line into Newcastle,. eliminating much of the congestion and pollution from the CBD. The regular rail service, when slowed down to 40 km/hr from Wickham would act as a light rail into Newcastle station, as described by rail expert, Mr Doug Cummings in Newcastle Herald March 2nd. Once trains are slowed down and tracks embedded it would allow removal of the ugly boundary fencing and overhead poles from the rail corridor as well as enabling access to the foreshore and improving traffic flow. Of course, timetabling of the trains and buses would need to be overhauled and coordinated. By removing all buses and many cars from the roads of the CBD, this would then provide space for bicycle lanes to be created and city pavements to be widened.

These options, if implemented into the renewal plan, would go a long way to fulfilling the NSW Government policy of improving public transport as well as showing a vision for the future and protecting the environment from excessive CO2 emissions. I am convinced that the transport initiatives as proposed will only deter people from outer Newcastle and regional centres from wanting to travel into the city thus compromising the renewal plan of Newcastle. Mr Cummings' suggestion is a brilliant solution to end all arguments about keeping the rail and would help the Renew Newcastle strategy succeed.

Further, I am concerned at the undemocratic manner in which the O'Farrell government has made a cabinet decision to cut the rail line to Newcastle without due consultation and involvement of the Newcastle residents, no plans have been put on public display, no cost/benefit analysis was undertaken and no evidence has been presented that retaining the rail line into Newcastle would

prevent the revitalization of the inner city. The decision about Newcastle trains should have been taken by local residents and rail experts such as Mr Doug Cummings and not just be left to politicians and their developer mates.

Thank you for consideration of these matters

Yours faithfully,

Kerry Fagan