

Dear Sir/Madam,

Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy ("**the Strategy**"), released by Minister Hazzard in December 2012. I am a current Maitland resident and also own a unit in Newcomen St, Newcastle, in which I intend to reside within the next 5-10 years. My comments on the Strategy are as follows:

A. Comments on the Strategy

- Due to the expected significant rise in residents in the CBD, land for associated infrastructure (e.g. new schools, community facilities, etc) will need to be earmarked promptly. Further, the planning approvals process needs to support the development of *well-designed*, spacious strata properties if the vision outlined in the Strategy is to be achieved.
- It is imperative that the sight-lines (including current building heights) for existing residents be maintained.
- The CBD needs to find its own identity. As a consequence of the building/expansion of the retail malls in Charlestown and Kotara (and their free parking), the Newcastle CBD has the capacity for the following uses: boutique retail, cultural centre and/or commercial hub. Encouragingly, all of these uses are addressed in the Strategy. It is noted that GPT is said to have shelved investment plans for the Hunter Mall back in 2010 allegedly because of a lack of decision on the future of the rail line. Given the significant investment already in Charlestown, Kotara and Green Hills Shopping Centres, it is not clear that sufficient demand for a further mall could ever have warranted GPT's investment (if such investment was based on mainstream retail). It is the CBD's lack of identity that has stymied new investment by the private sector (making significant investment too risky), not the existence of the rail line. If a distinct and value-adding identity was to emerge, then new investment would naturally follow.
- The CBD's identity needs to be supported by efficient and consistent public policy initiatives, an efficient public transport system and ease of access to the CBD. Due to the numerous and varied reports that have been done over the last decade in connection with the revitalisation of the CBD, it appears that ad-hoc initiatives have been implemented from each report, but without an overall vision as to how the implemented initiatives would work in unison. For example, the significant increase in CBD parking costs recently does not support boutique retail. The proposed truncation of the rail line does not support the vision of the CBD as cultural centre. If the Strategy is to be successful, then a re-consideration of all implemented initiatives is required to avoid inconsistent direction.

- It is submitted that scarce government funding would be better directed to implementing the Strategy, in priority to truncating the rail line.

B. Comments on the decision to truncate the rail line west of Wickham Station (“*the Decision*”)

It is not clear why the O’Farrell government has refused to carry out a public consultation process in connection with this significant issue. The lack of transparency is not what the voters expect from Mr O’Farrell’s government. After the Decision was announced, I submitted a number of requests for information to various authorities (under the Government Information Public Access legislation). These requests are attached at “A” to “D” (“**GIPA Requests**”). As at today’s date, the only authority that has substantively responded to my request is Transport for NSW (see responses received at “E” to “G”, with Transport for NSW’s response at “G”). Of concern is the response received from Hunter Development Corporation (“**HDC**”) (at “F”). Documents from Transport for NSW show that a study procured by HDC from Parsons Brinckerhoff is the *only study* that has recommended the truncation of the rail line (with all other studies/reports either silent on the issue *or* reporting on various aspects of the Decision, such as feasibility or cost, as a *fait accompli*). Despite this, HDC did not provide a copy of Parsons Brinckerhoff’s study in response to my GIPA Request. A significant driver of Parsons Brinckerhoff’s findings was the freeing up of the rail corridor for future development. One study from an authority with a significant vested interest in the subject matter is not a sound or reasonable basis for such a significant investment of taxpayer’s money.

Specific comments on the Decision are set out below:

- The legal means of achieving the *permanent* designation of the vacated section of the rail line as “infrastructure” is not understood.
- The financial benefits/business case for truncation, given the \$350m+ cost, are not understood. The lack of investment in the CBD is not the result of the rail line, but rather the lack of identity of the CBD given the building/expansion of the retail malls at Charlestown/Kotara/Green Hills (which can be directly linked to the CBD’s decline). The CBD needs to carve out its own identity. The truncation of the rail line will impede the CBD’s renewal by making access to the CBD more difficult.
- In documents produced in response to my GIPA Requests, Aecom commented that journey times for persons transitioning from the proposed new Wickham station to buses will increase by more than 18 minutes, for those wishing to travel to the east end. The increased journey times for rail users is expected to cause up to 23% of current and future rail users to cease using rail transport. The government’s goal of achieving 20% public transport use by 2016 will not be achieved.
- As a Maitland resident that sometimes has to drive to Newcastle for work reasons, the current congested road trip from Maitland to Newcastle is causing a significant decline in work productivity due to wasted transport time. A program to encourage road users to switch to rail transport would provide significant productivity benefits and avoid the need for (what will be, unless something is done to decrease road usage) significant road investment. It is noted that none of the reports that have been provided to me in response

to my GIPA Requests make any comment on how rail usage can be increased. The current pricing is part of the problem – it costs nearly \$10 for a Maitland-to-Newcastle return trip of approx 1hr while a trip of 2-3 hrs from Newcastle to North Sydney costs less (around \$8). Usage could be significantly increased (with the ensuing productivity benefits) by considering more beneficial ticket pricing on the Hunter line.

- If there is a business case for truncation of the rail line west of Wickham, then to avoid the detrimental implications set out above (including reduction in accessibility to the CBD, increased journey times and reduction in public transport usage overall) and to bring the greatest benefit to the largest proportion of the public, it will be necessary to immediately replace the Wickham-to-Newcastle journey with a rail-based form of public transport using the existing rail corridor. It is noted that light rail is presently being designed/constructed in Sydney for a number of key access routes. In the information provided to date in response to my GIPA Requests, I have not seen any consideration of any “creative” solutions for the retention of rail transport to central Newcastle. Please find attached at “G” one such creative solution recently published in the Newcastle Herald. If this solution is feasible, and there is a business case for truncation, then I endorse the implementation of this solution to mitigate (what would otherwise be) detrimental consequences to accessibility to the east end of Newcastle. Mr Cummings’ solution will also enable visual improvement/beautification of the rail corridor. A more comprehensive examination of these “creative” options (still involving rail) with a subsequent public consultation is necessary to remove suspicion in connection with the Decision.

Ultimately, the points above are being raised because I simply do not understand why the Decision has been made and I look forward to receiving a response that answers this question as soon as possible.

Any questions in relation to this letter can be directed to:

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320
Phone: 0408 251 463
Email: nicoleg5791@hotmail.com

Yours faithfully,

Nicole Geoghegan

'A'

1 January 2013

Principal Manager, Information
Transport for NSW
By email: gipa@transport.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009
("the Act")**

This is an informal request for information under the Act in connection with the decision by State government (announced on 14 December 2012) to truncate the Newcastle rail line at a new station to be constructed west of the existing Wickham station ("**the Decision**"). The following documents are requested under the Act in connection with the Decision:

- A. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, Transport for NSW ("**the Department**") since 1 January 2010 in relation to:
 - a. The usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - b. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - c. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 (released by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in December 2012) ("**the Draft Strategy**") are successfully implemented);
 - d. The usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line;
 - e. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line; and
 - f. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Draft Strategy are successfully implemented);
- B. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 in connection with the various options available for the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line (including documents, reports, advices and the like setting out the brief to any consultants engaged by the Department, the benefits and disadvantages of such options and the costings of such options);
- C. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Maitland-to-Newcastle car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- D. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Newcastle-to-Sydney car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- E. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department evidencing the journey time impacts of the various options available for the future of the

Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line (including the journey time impacts of the Decision);

- F. Minutes of meetings held between the Department and any of the following (or their respective employees or consultants):
- a. Newcastle City Council;
 - b. Maitland City Council;
 - c. Member for Maitland, Robyn Parker;
 - d. Member for Upper Hunter, George Souris;
 - e. Department of Planning and Infrastructure;
 - f. Office of Environment and Heritage; and
 - g. Any Board member of the Hunter Infrastructure & Investment Fund,

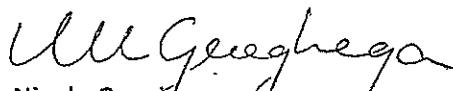
after 1 January 2010 in connection with the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line.

Information in response to the above requests is to be addressed to:

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Thank you for your assistance. Any queries in relation to this request may be directed to me on the phone number below.

Yours faithfully



Nicole Geoghegan
Phone: 0408 251 465

1 January 2013

Freedom of Information Officer
New South Wales Department of Planning & Infrastructure
23-33 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009
("the Act")**

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- A. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure ("**the Department**") since 1 January 2010 in relation to:
 - a. The usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - b. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - c. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 (released by the Department in December 2012) ("**the Draft Strategy**") are successfully implemented);
 - d. The usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line;
 - e. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line; and
 - f. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Draft Strategy are successfully implemented);
- B. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 in connection with the various options available for the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line (including documents, reports, advices and the like setting out the brief to any consultants engaged by the Department, the benefits and disadvantages of such options and the costings of such options);
- C. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Maitland-to-Newcastle car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- D. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Department after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Newcastle-to-Sydney car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- E. Copy of Appendices 1 and 3 to the Draft Strategy 2012;

- F. Copy of minutes or other records of the content and outcome of the workshops held between Aecom, Transport for NSW and Newcastle Buses (as referred to in part 4.5 of the Draft Strategy);
- G. Minutes of meetings held between the Department and any of the following (or their respective employees or consultants):
 - a. Newcastle City Council;
 - b. Maitland City Council;
 - c. Member for Maitland, Robyn Parker;
 - d. Member for Upper Hunter, George Souris;
 - e. Transport for NSW;
 - f. Office of Environment and Heritage; and
 - g. Any Board member of the Hunter Infrastructure & Investment Fund,

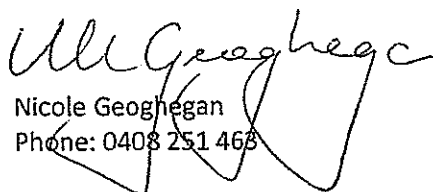
after 1 January 2010 in connection with the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line.

Information in response to the above requests is to be addressed to:

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Thank you for your assistance. Any queries in relation to this request may be directed to me on the phone number below.

Yours faithfully



Nicole Geoghegan
Phone: 0408 251 468

1 January 2013

Freedom of Information Officer
Hunter Development Corporation
By email: hdc@hdc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009
("the Act")**

This is an informal request for information under the Act in connection with the decision by State government (announced on 14 December 2012) to truncate the Newcastle rail line at a new station to be constructed west of the existing Wickham station ("the Decision"). The following documents are requested under the Act in connection with the Decision:

- A. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Hunter Development Corporation ("the Corporation") since 1 January 2010 in relation to:
 - a. The usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - b. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - c. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 (released by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in December 2012) ("the Draft Strategy") are successfully implemented);
 - d. The usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line;
 - e. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line; and
 - f. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Draft Strategy are successfully implemented);
- B. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Corporation after 1 January 2010 in connection with the various options available for the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line (including documents, reports, advices and the like setting out the brief to any consultants engaged by the Corporation, the benefits and disadvantages of such options and the costings of such options);
- C. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Corporation after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Maitland-to-Newcastle car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- D. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Corporation after 1 January 2010 showing current road traffic usage for Newcastle-to-Sydney car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;

E. Minutes of meetings held between the Corporation and any of the following (or their respective employees or consultants):

- a. Newcastle City Council;
- b. Maitland City Council;
- c. Member for Maitland, Robyn Parker;
- d. Member for Upper Hunter, George Souris;
- e. Department of Planning and Infrastructure;
- f. Transport for NSW;
- g. Office of Environment and Heritage; and
- h. Any Board member of the Hunter Infrastructure & Investment Fund,

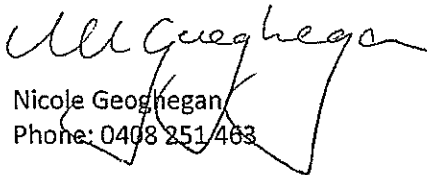
after 1 January 2010 in connection with the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line.

Information in response to the above requests is to be addressed to:

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Thank you for your assistance. Any queries in relation to this request may be directed to me on the phone number below.

Yours faithfully


Nicole Geoghegan
Phone: 0408 251 463

'D'

1 January 2013

Freedom of Information Officer
Hunter Infrastructure & Investment Fund
c/o Hunter Development Corporation
by email: hdc@hdc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009
("the Act")**

This is an informal request for information under the Act in connection with the decision by State government (announced on 14 December 2012) to truncate the Newcastle rail line at a new station to be constructed west of the existing Wickham station ("the Decision"). The following documents are requested under the Act in connection with the Decision:

- A. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the Hunter Infrastructure & Investment Fund ("the HIIF") since its formation in 2011 in relation to:
 - a. The usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - b. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line;
 - c. The projected future usage of the Maitland-to-Newcastle rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 (released by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in December 2012) ("the Draft Strategy") are successfully implemented);
 - d. The usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line;
 - e. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line; and
 - f. The projected future usage of the Newcastle-to-Central rail line (if the behavioural programs recommended by Aecom in Appendix 3 of the Draft Strategy are successfully implemented);
- B. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the HIIF since its formation in 2011 in connection with the various options available for the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line (including documents, reports, advices and the like setting out the brief to any consultants engaged by the HIIF, the benefits and disadvantages of such options and the costings of such options);
- C. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the HIIF since its formation in 2011 showing current road traffic usage for Maitland-to-Newcastle car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- D. Documents, reports, advices and the like prepared by, or procured by, the HIIF since its formation in 2011 showing current road traffic usage for Newcastle-to-Sydney car trips (and vice versa) and forecast future usage for this route;
- E. Minutes of meetings held between the any member of HIIF (or its consultants, advisers and the like) and any of the following (or their respective employees or consultants):

- a. Newcastle City Council;
- b. Maitland City Council;
- c. Member for Maitland, Robyn Parker;
- d. Member for Upper Hunter, George Souris;
- e. Transport for NSW;
- f. Office of Environment and Heritage; and
- g. Department of Planning and Infrastructure,

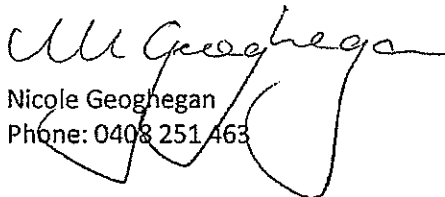
after the formation of HIF in 2011 in connection with the future of the Wickham-to-Newcastle section of the rail line.

Information in response to the above requests is to be addressed to:

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Thank you for your assistance. Any queries in relation to this request may be directed to me on the phone number below.

Yours faithfully



Nicole Geoghegan
Phone: 0408 251 463



Planning & Infrastructure

Corporate Governance and Policy

Contact: Ramani Waruevitane
Phone: (02) 9228 6597
Fax: (02) 9228 6120
Email: patiunit@planning.nsw.gov.au
Our ref: GIPAA 2012/13-066
Your ref:
File:

Ms Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Dear Ms Geoghegan

I refer to your request, under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (*GIPA Act*), to obtain information relating to the Newcastle rail line.

The GIPA Act states that all applications are to be completed within 20 working days. However, where it is necessary for a third party consultation to be conducted, section 57(2) of the GIPA Act provides for an additional 10 working days to deal with the application. I am hereby notifying you of the need to extend the decision period for this application by 10 working days. If no suspensions or further extensions of the decision period occur, we must decide the application by 26 March 2013.

Should you have any questions relating to this request, please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 9228 6597.

Yours sincerely

Ramani Warusevitane
Coordinator
Public Access to Information & Privacy
28 February 2013

4 February 2013

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
MAITLAND NSW 2320

Dear Ms Geoghegan

I refer to your informal request, under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act), to obtain information relating to the truncation of the Newcastle rail line.

Your informal request was received on 7 January 2013 when the office reopened following the Christmas break. I apologise for the delay in making contact with you.

After a careful assessment of the terms of your application I have come to the following conclusions:

- A** HDC does not hold any records as described in part A of your application
- B – E** There may be a number of records that relate to some of the subject matter in the remainder of the application. This would need to be investigated and a large number of documents searched. This may take considerable time.

In my view it is likely that the HDC holds only a small amount of information covered by the terms of your application. Of any information there may be it is likely to involve third parties. It may also involve Cabinet information.

For these reasons I regret to have to tell you that the HDC is not prepared to deal with your application as an informal application. The HDC is inclined to consider the searches required to locate any information there may be, and to consult relevant third parties, would require an unreasonable and substantial diversion of HDC resources. Further, if there was information covered by the criteria in Clause 2 of Schedule 1 of the GIPA Act (Cabinet information) there would be a conclusive presumption of an overriding public interest against disclosure of that information, and the HDC could not provide access to it.

Accordingly, I would suggest that you consider whether to make a formal access application under the GIPA Act, and before doing so to discuss with me the terms of that application, so that it would be feasible for this small organisation both to process, and to provide as much information covered by those terms as possible.

Should you have any questions relating to this request, please do not hesitate to contact me on 4904 2764.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bob Hawes', written in a cursive style.

Bob Hawes
GENERAL MANAGER

Email: bob.hawes@hdc.nsw.gov.au

Telephone: 4904 2764



Transport

7 March 2013

Our Ref: I-1213-37

Nicole Geoghegan
43 Regent Street
Maitland NSW 2320

Dear Ms Geoghegan

INFORMAL RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I refer to your email and letter dated 1 January 2013, requesting access to the information regarding the Newcastle Line. The terms of your request are set out in **Attachment A**.

I have decided to deal with your request as an informal request under section 8 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (the 'GIPA Act').

In dealing with your request, I have decided to provide you with a copy of the following documents:

- *Newcastle City Centre Transport Management and Accessibility Plan – Summary Volume*
- *Newcastle City Centre Transport Management and Accessibility Plan Phase 1, Newcastle City Centre Bus Strategy*
- *Newcastle City Centre Transport Management and Accessibility Plan Phase 2, Integrated Transport Strategy*
- *Household Travel Survey – Transfigures: Travel in Sydney, Newcastle and Illawarra*
- *Preliminary Assessment of Newcastle Truncation – Wickham Station*
- *Media release: New jobs and homes for Newcastle*
- *Newcastle Renewal Frequently Asked Questions, Department of Planning and Infrastructure*
- *TfNSW standard correspondence responses*

The documents are being made available pursuant to s8 of the GIPA Act.

I have also included some references to further information which you may find useful. These are contained in **Attachment B**.

In addition to the information provided, Transport for NSW ('TfNSW') may hold additional documents. Should you require further information from TfNSW, please submit a formal access application. **Attachment C** describes the statutory requirements for making a formal access application.

Please note that our Road Strategy team has advised that Roads and Maritime Services ('RMS') may hold other documents related to the terms of your request.

Should you require further information, please submit a formal access application to RMS. I have provided a copy of the Access Application form in **Attachment D** for your information.

If you require any further information or clarification please contact me on (02) 8202 3862.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nageb Al-Malah', with a stylized, flowing script.

Nageb Al-Malah
A/Manager
Government Information & Privacy

end the arguments

Keep the rail and open up access to the foreshore? Yes, both sides of the debate can win, writes **Doug Cummings**.

FOR years the ongoing debate has raged about whether to remove or retain the city-centre train line.

Why must Newcastle be forced to stagnate (according to the developers) by retaining the existing infrastructure – or be disenfranchised by having the rail corridor removed?

Why can't both sides of the current debate win?

To my way of thinking, there is a simple and logical way to open up access to the foreshore for development and still retain the transport corridor into the eastern part of the city.

There appears to be little or no disagreement that the eastern end of the city will be vastly improved by having greater access to the foreshore.

If that is a given, then what follows is to find an acceptable way for the mandatory removal of the hideous brick wall and other fencing that runs most of the way between Wickham and Newcastle station.

Understandably this poses a safety element under current legislation. But it's easy to resolve:

1. Pass necessary legislation to permit trains to be operated as if they were a tram at a speed of less than 40km/h between Wickham station up to Newcastle.

2. Relocate Wickham station to the western side of Stewart Avenue and terminate all eight-car trains at Wickham.

3. Operate only two-car and four-car trains between Wickham and Newcastle.



DIVIDE: The rail line does not need to split the harbour from the city.

4. Remove all but one single track from Wickham station through to Newcastle station, leaving just two platforms at Newcastle station.

5. Turn over the other platform areas at Newcastle station to increase the bus terminal.

6. Remove all boundary fencing between Wickham station and Newcastle station to permit free access between Hunter Street and the harbour.

7. Replace the A-frame catenary supports with single cantilever support poles.

8. Remove the north platform at Civic station.

9. Embed the remaining single track to effectively convert the heavy rail to the equivalent of a tram rail, so that it no longer protrudes above

the adjacent road surface.

10. Install traffic lights along the track route at selected road crossover locations between Wickham and Newcastle.

11. Convert the removed track sections into a road surface and allow joint access for trains, trams and cars – as they do in Melbourne's city centre. This could provide a one-way road and enable Wharf Road to be a one-way direction of travel in the opposite direction.

12. Revise train timetables to limit the time that trains stand at Newcastle station.

13. Stable surplus and standby trains or carriages between Hamilton and Wickham.

Closing off the rail line at Wickham (or, as some have

suggested, at Hamilton-Woodville Junction) is akin to saying that in future all Newcastle and country trains will terminate at Strathfield and passengers will need to change to a shuttle bus or alternative mode of transport or take another train to get into Sydney Central.

I'm sure that would be well received by NSW citizens at large!

But that is precisely what those proposing the removal of all rail services into Newcastle station are saying, by forcing a change of transport mode for the last few kilometres.

Is this a second-rate solution at best? And for what?

In years to come, the greatest asset to the future development of Newcastle, the city centre and eastern end of the city, will be a much improved track access and transport corridor, not its removal.

One only has to look at overseas cities to see the changes and benefit of gaining rapid access to city centres.

And as Newcastle and the surrounding districts grow, that will become more evident.

Moreover, converting part of the current heavy-rail track between Wickham and Newcastle to an effective tram railway will enable additional tram 4-foot, 8½-inch gauge routes to be developed.

They can also be interfaced with new low-floor tram rolling stock in future years to once again service places such as Merewether, Adamstown, Kotara, Wallsend, the University.

This would also assist the demise or reduction of cars in the city.

It's a great pity our forefathers lacked vision and sold off most of those corridors, and that they ripped up the tracks that existed in the past.

Doug Cummings is a retired rail engineer

that a giant pothole had out the tyres of at least in one morning on Brook Pokolbin. This what you say.

Cessnock council ought in the head. Bad roads are thing but bad roads that to its best tourist attraction lazy stupidity.

So much money goes out Hunter and so little return

Nothing worse than hitting pothole, especially with massive amount of money government raises from

Lakeview Parade, Pelican the soccer ovals, is getting bad. So many people use picnic at the foreshore.

muZ

Or Pynsent continues to promise after promise in the pathetic and dangers around Cessnock, yet not actually gets done! At the elections, he said that said that the roads would be a priority. Yet, as a Cessnock resident, I'm still yet to see

ABC radio reported yesterday the state government put under a billion dollars in from Singleton and Muswell areas alone, and that would include the payroll tax the companies pay either. It's some of this money to tie the communities, not the \$10 million they handed Hunter councils.

Tim

I was driving up Broke Road afternoon and I had to miss a pothole on the road nearly had a head-on collision with a car coming in the opposite direction. Please fix our wine country areas by