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The Hon Michael Gallacher  
Minister for the Hunter  
Parliament House  
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~~16/11/12~~ 16/11/12



Dear Sir

As I'm sure you are aware, a decision will soon be made regarding the future of the railway between Hamilton and Newcastle. This has come about as a result of a small number of people within the business community and the city council who have been lobbying for the line to be removed. The proponents of the removal the railway say the line is a barrier between the city centre and the foreshore. They also say the line needs to be removed to allow development which will revitalise the city centre.

However, contrary to what they say, the railway is not a barrier. The railway is an essential transport artery. I've noticed that those who want the line removed do not use public transport. If this proposal is implemented and suburban rail services are stopped at Hamilton, commuters and other users of suburban rail services will be seriously inconvenienced while disabled passengers will be disadvantaged. People who use Newcastle's suburban rail services are being treated with contempt.

Many people who use the suburban rail services have said that if the services are terminated at Hamilton, they will abandon public transport altogether. This is what has happened whenever rail services have been terminated or even suspended in other cities in Australia or the rest of the world. In each case public transport usage declined dramatically. Conversely, when rail services have been reinstated or improved, patronage increases. Closing rail services does not attract people to public transport or improve cities.

At a time when concern has been expressed about the low use of public transport in Newcastle and the Hunter region, this proposal simply doesn't make sense.

Newcastle's alleged problems are the result of poor planning decisions. The High rise buildings that have been constructed in Honeysuckle and along wharf road are the barrier, not the railway. The issue of access from one side of the railway to the other could be easily

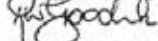
solved by building more foot bridges and more level crossings. If the railway is a barrier to development, there is the option of building over the line as has been done in just about every city in Australia that has suburban rail services. However those who want the line removed either don't know, or more worryingly, don't want to know about this option.

The large amount of money required for the new arrangements to terminate suburban rail services at Hamilton would be better spent building more trains for additional suburban rail services to Maitland and Muswellbrook. Additional services are needed to deal with increasing traffic congestion on the New England Highway.

Money also needs to be spent to plan for reinstating suburban rail services to Toronto and Cessnock. In the long term planning also needs to begin for the construction of suburban railways to Port Stevens and to Raymond Terrace. These railways are needed to deal with increasing levels of traffic congestion in these regions.

Terminating suburban rail services between Hamilton and Newcastle will cost a lot of money that would leave Newcastle with nothing but more traffic and parking problems. The money would be better spent improving Suburban rail services in the Hunter. Please do not allow the State Government close the line.

Yours Sincerely



Ronald Goodrick