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12-3-13.

Re-Response to Urban Renewal Strategy.

This report is ill conceived and terribly planned for the simple fact it terminates a very well patronised and convenient transport corridor into the CBD.

It doesn't take into account the most vulnerable in our community. eg. Pensioners, elderly and the disabled. They cannot possibly change from a train at Broadmeadow (Sydney trains) or Wickham (Upper Hunter Valley) and use a few disability unfriendly buses to finish their journey.

The State Govt. has no idea. By all means revitalise the city but leave the important rapid transport system (trains) where it is.

The Harbour cannot be opened up to the CBD when most of the line is flanked by buildings, with more buildings to come.

Please read the enclosed information, then please pass on to the relevant people.

Thanking you,

Mr Dennis Hall.



The 13-point plan to 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.

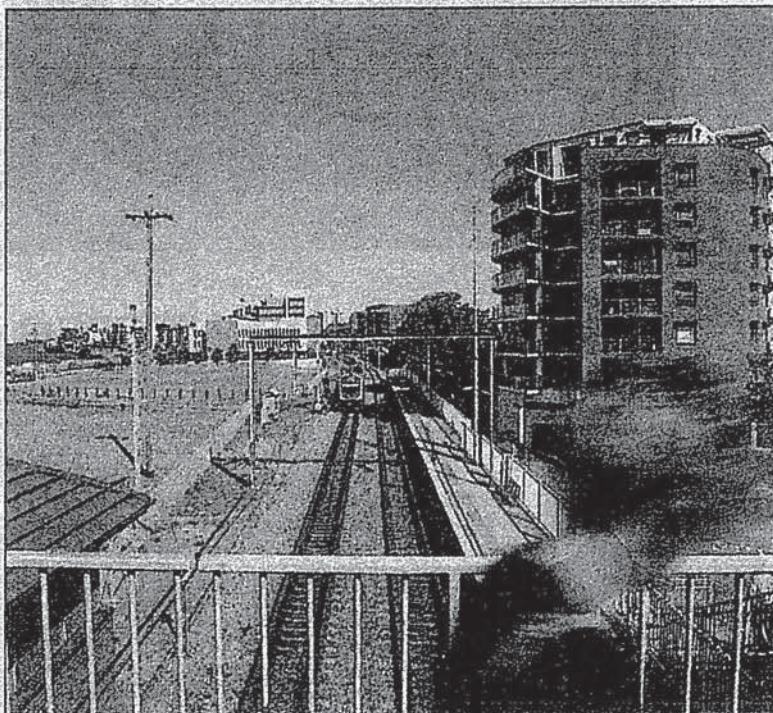
If that is a given, then what follows is to find an acceptable way for the mandatory removal of the hideous brick wall and other fencing that runs most of the way between Wickham and Newcastle station.

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 and 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 benefits 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 gauged 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 demolition 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