

## Emma Batchelor

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**From:** Greg Howley <heylo@optusnet.com.au>  
**Sent:** Saturday, 15 December 2012 5:59 PM  
**To:** Public Hazzard's Office Email  
**Cc:** Premier@nsw.gov.au; Public Berejiklian's Office Email;  
newcastle@parliament.nsw.gov.au  
**Subject:** Newcastle urban renewal

Minister,

I am moved to write this email as a concerned citizen of Newcastle. Your announcement yesterday requires an astonishing leap of faith on the part of the people of Newcastle. Such faith in NSW has proven to be totally unjustified time and time again. In short minister, we don't believe that your government is serious in its' statement of commitment to Newcastle given the context of decades of neglect stretching back to the Liberal government of Nick Greiner during the earthquake and indeed before.

I find it astounding that you would ask for that faith and make the statement that you are "totally committed" when the so called "vision" that you have outlined has almost no detail other than a concept that the Store building at Wickham should be the rail terminus and that Newcastle West will be the new CBD. Your government's contribution to this vision is to be \$120m and you will be asking for \$100m from the Commonwealth. With due respect minister, that is insulting beyond belief. Several years ago the cost of terminating the rail line and building a new terminus was estimated at \$500m. Why the sudden shrinkage? I don't believe that costs have fallen. It can only mean that your concept is much smaller.

In addition, to hinge the concept on a substantial contribution by the Commonwealth is no less insulting. I might remind you that the Commonwealth offered \$7m towards Newcastle Art Gallery re-development to match the contribution by the people of Newcastle and the city council. Yet your government is refusing to match this relatively small amount placing the entire project at risk. I truly hope you see the irony in this, particularly given the multi billions earmarked for the redevelopment of the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Entertainment and Convention Centres at Darling Harbour. I also find it hard to believe that the Commonwealth will enthusiastically throw it's support behind removing rail transport in Australia's pre-eminent non-capital city.

I also wish to frame this correspondence within the context of transport infrastructure planned or underway in Sydney which is forecast at a whopping \$25 BILLION including the NW rail linke, the Dulwich Hill light rail extension, the George Street light rail project, the USYD and UNSW light rail lines and another harbour rail crossing. Yet you are proudly trumpeting a \$120m budget in the state's second city – not to improve, not to build but to remove rail infrastructure! With this inequity and double standard I find it hard to understand how you believe that you can show your face in Newcastle without embarrassment.

I think that my preamble expresses my total indignation, something which I am far from alone in feeling. I will get to my point. It is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE to remove any more rail services in Newcastle without a costed plan, signed, sealed and irrevocably delivered, to replace and expand other rail services. Shuttle buses are NOT and will NEVER be acceptable. They are uncomfortable, unreliable and add nothing to the infrastructure and amenity of a city. By your own admission, light rail is "10 to 20 years away". In reality you are saying that your government has no commitment to rail services in Newcastle.

Unless and until a genuine comprehensive transport plan for Newcastle is on the table, I cannot and will not support any such absurdly fuzzy and impoverishly funded "vision". By a genuine comprehensive transport plan I am referring to replacement of heavy rail with frequent light rail services from the proposed heavy rail terminus, wherever that may be, through to Civic, Newcastle and Newcastle East. I am also referring to reintroduction of light rail to other major urban centres in the Newcastle metropolitan area to re-create a comprehensive transport network, superior to the original Newcastle tram network that was removed and dismantled by the NSW

government in the 1950's. If it is good enough for NSW to reintroduce a light rail system in Sydney, it should be good enough to reintroduce a light rail system in Newcastle.

Minister, you may be assured that without a GENUINE commitment to rail transport in Newcastle now and in the future along the lines of the many rail projects in Sydney that this decision will be far from universally supported. In fact it will attract resentment, bitterness and a backlash against your government. I am not a militant individual, but I am passionate about this city and bitterly disappointed with NSW and it's long history of neglect. I intend to join other concerned citizens in protesting against your government and this decision to cut rail services in Newcastle without reintroducing any rail alternative.

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