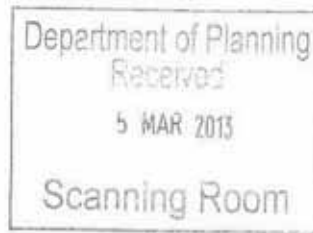


Ms K. Martin
60 Henry Street
TIGHES HILL NSW 2297
NEWCASTLE



Manager Centres and Urban Renewal
Department of Planning & Infrastructure
GPO Box 39,
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Dear Sir/Madam,

1st March 2013

RE: UNWANTED PROPOSED CLOSURE OF NEWCASTLE RAILWAY WICKHAM TO NEWCASTLE EAST

I am writing to you as I am outraged by the very idea of closing down and cutting off the vital transport system which has successfully served the Hunter, Maitland, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle residents for over a century.

I believe this to be intragovernmental misrepresentation of the people by your complete lack of public consultation, which I assure you is unlawfully acting against the Common Law rights of the Public, the Mayor's Property Development misrepresentation and conflict of interest in owning adjoining property (Jeff McCloy), not to mention the sheer arrogance of the Hunter Development Corporations lack of transparency with the public yet again.

Closing down a vital railway service not only diminishes the business district but it denies access to residents and country commuters who use the public transport system on a daily. They decide to develop prime real estate for office buildings WITHOUT PUBLIC OPINION, this goes against the Constitutional Common Law by which we the public abide, not to Corporate Law set by a government without the majority vote of Newcastle residents. This suggestion has been going on for 26 years and STILL WE WANT TO IMPROVE OUR RAIL AND KEEP IT. THAT IS THE MESSAGE TO YOU.

This could not and would not in anyway benefit the people, it would only serve to hammer the final nail in the coffin and cut off Newcastle completely from the thousands of people who access the train on a daily basis with Newcastle as their destination.

I believe Newcastle needs development and there is much to be improved, but these funds will not to be sourced from selling off the rail line and cutting of the people. We say NO.

Only by injecting funds into the revitalization of the city by government investment, local investment and by communicating suggested development plans transparently through consultation with the population can this be achieved.

This consultation process (two public sessions on one day where the public got three minutes on a microphone?) and development plan has not shown any transparency, not even when spending thousands producing a brochure outlining the plan still the lies - This brochure is not even asking if we want the rail but showing us what we are getting when it is gone. The evidence of the real plan has only been forthcoming by the people of Newcastle investigating for themselves.

If you care to look at the systems operating in Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne with high population movement - they have trains, there is no faster and quantifiably larger people mover than trains. By cycling through Newcastle on one occasion with Tim Owen does not give you the full picture of Newcastle nor the quick decision upon the city's fate that you decide upon in one day. Remarkably Tim Owen was voted into office her on the premise of keeping the rail, now he has done a complete backflip and want s to remove it?

In Perth they are able to move 70,000 people per day on trains alone!! Trains increase metropolitan efficiency and there are vast international studies showing land and property values uplift within 4-500m pedestrian catchment to a Rail Station, another reason for investment near rail stations.

There are large crowds disembarking on the weekends for direct access to the beach, mall and shops, Where packed trains deliver the people right into the centre of Newcastle and more specifically, to the beach. Can you imagine forty surfers getting off a train along with elderly people and families to try and squash into a bus with surfboards and prams? Or try moving elderly passengers and families quickly over uneven ground to a bus stop?

I guarantee you that buses will never replace the speed and accuracy, quantity, disability access and lack of pollution and congestion that a train provides a city- that is why most large cities have them.

The buses will not cope with the projected future growth of this city and road base congestion of traffic into the CBD will add more standstill traffic time as well as delayed drop off and pick up breaking the bus to train transport connections in and out of the city. Bob Carr already cut a vital link to Murwillumbah. The buses that serve Fassifern to Toronto DO NOT WORK EITHER.

This Strategic Plan to Revitalise Newcastle is to get more people in more cars, some buses but ultimately get their hands on the money the rail land will generate – THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN. I thought the government were meant to be aiming for less FOSSIL FUEL USAGE - NOT MORE, car reliance will only increase the fossil fuel usage.

The majority of residents of Newcastle, Maitland, Hunter and Lake Macquarie DO NOT WANT A BUS SERVICE TO THE CBD – WE ALREADY HAVE ONE. The Mayor of Maitland also stands firmly against this cut, this will also impact businesses surrounding the rail line all the way into Newcastle where streets will be severed off (very busy Beaumont Street) from the flow through traffic. The message to you is IMPROVE BUT DO NOT DESTROY A SYSTEM THAT ALREADY WORKS.

The Royal Hunter Hospital which was beautifully situated within walking distance to the train station and benefitted patients as well as staff worked perfectly well until it was sold off and The John Hunter Hospital relocated to a hill in the middle of nowhere – thirty minutes drive from the CBD train station that perfectly served it.

How does a Planning Minister not see the vast loss in this inconceivable blunder? The Hunter Hospital is on its last legs as a functioning public service due to ongoing government cuts and zero investment and now its miles away from public transport and the people that use it. I do truly believe it's the metered car parking that funds the hospital as there is no other way to explain why there have been so many financial cuts and staff are stressed to the maximum by ministers that keep promising to inject the money into hospitals then invariably spend it elsewhere and the hospitals are at bursting point all over the country. Currently nurses get better pay at Woolies or Coles than in a Public Hospital, how do you sleep at night really?? This is evil.

Ironically the Property Developer who built the Hunter Hospital is now the Mayor of Newcastle??? The building blunders of which he oversaw are now a matter of Health & Safety emergencies as rain flows through the ceiling of the Royal Wing destroying valuable equipment for the Orthopaedic staff to use, keeping patients waiting up to four hours due to the limited room space available.

I do not know where these ministers are obtaining their statistics as they appear to be inept and biased with their statistics in favour of the property developers. The money that this prime land will bring to the developers is massive and this is another conflict of interest between the co-joined (Property development network of The Hunter Development Corporation, Newcastle Now, Hunter Business Chamber, Newcastle Alliance and Fix Our City).

Most especially those in positions of power with vested interests – Most notably Jeff McCloy. The RTA major guidelines for all cities in Australia are in favour of a 90% push to public transport via mass movement and this can only be achieved via rail, this guideline does not encourage people to use cars to travel to work.

Channel nine/ NBN recently held two surveys that clearly stated the majority of people in the Hunter, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle want the rail kept and improved.

I recently undertook a survey of residents of Newcastle, Hunter, Lake Macquarie and Maitland asking if they were aware of the plans. We have had one information session through Newcastle City Council that saw a two hour session reduced to half as the council talked about the benefits for an hour and then instructed a convener (working on behalf of the developers) give three minutes to each public speaker, let me ask you how is this a consultation with the people and saturation of the population with information regarding this plan?

The duty of disclosure of the planning office is to advertise and inform the public via the media with information about this proposal but none has been forthcoming since its late release in January, even though it was announced by the minister to have been available in December 2012 and it wasn't even printed.

I believe there is also a biased conflict of interest in that the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy as well as the CEO of The Hunter Development Corporation, can own adjoining land to the rail line and push for a rail closure. How is it then that they are allowed to put forward this proposal I ask you?

The Planning Department has produced a very expensive visual brochure and plan to revitalize the CBD over the next twenty years but we residents wonder where is the money coming from to finance this project ? The only response to this is selling off prime land to raise the funds as their solution. The council is busily charging for parking in the CBD but in no way helping businesses to attract customers as the parking fees are so high and the buildings are sitting empty waiting for new tenant to bring back the businesses and shops and services into Newcastle.

There is a younger creative generation that is emerging in Hunter Street district and this is already attracting shoppers. The cruise ships arriving into the harbour could also be welcomed properly with a properly developed arrival and departure dock. Where is Newcastle's Tourist Information office?

Renew Newcastle has done more in the past two years to revitalize Newcastle by putting tenants in vacant properties than the fully government funded and co-joined PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF the Hunter Development Corporation, Newcastle Now, Hunter Business Chamber, Newcastle Alliance and Fix Our City. This really is quite appalling.

The John Hunter Hospital is STILL WAITING FOR THE FUNDS as are the increased lanes north to Williamstown.

NO, DO NOT CUT OUR RAIL LINE IT BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE and though it may be old it still serves us very well.

A message to your planning ministers, I am sure the process is to consult with the people of Newcastle , Maitland, Hunter & Lake Macquarie? after all they are the ones affected by these inept planning decisions made by ministers who visit occasionally but don't live here nor do they use public transport daily - the services so many thousands of public people rely upon.

I call on you to investigate these matters urgently and Stop this unwanted closure of our beloved Rail.

I look forward to hearing your comments.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Martin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

K. Martin