

urbanrenewal - Comments regarding Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

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Subject: Comments regarding Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

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Comments regarding Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

I write to record my opposition to the aspects of the NURS that seek to terminate the rail line at Wickham.

The strategy relies on an earlier misleading recommendation from the HDC that states that the University of Newcastle's City Campus was contingent upon the removal of the rail to Newcastle. This is untrue and has been confirmed publicly by the Vice-Chancellor. This misrepresentation is being used to claim that HDC's preferred Wickham terminus makes economic sense. It clearly does not. If the University City Campus is included on the benefit side of both options (cut the rail and keep the rail) – a scenario incorrectly omitted by HDC – then retaining the rail emerges as the far superior option in cost benefit terms (using HDC's own figures). Keeping the rail is the economically superior choice. **HDC's economic analysis is patently misleading.**

Projects such as the University of Newcastle's City Campus, with its influx of students and staff to the Civic precinct, would be at a great disadvantage should the direct rail connection be lost from Civic Station. With the loss of rail convenience no doubt many will opt for car over bus, thereby increasing CBD traffic and parking congestion. **It is foolish to remove the rail from Civic when the University's Faculty of Business and Law has recently confirmed it has received government funding to relocate to the Civic area.**

The new Courthouse building, also in the Civic area, was recently approved – despite very limited parking – precisely because of its proximity to Civic Station.

It doesn't make sense to spend vast sums on money for a reduced transport outcome. There is no "seamless" interchange; passengers must walk between the proposed Wickham terminus and buses on Hunter Street. If the so-called "seamless" interchange were so convenient and desirable then rail commuters to Newcastle and Civic stations would already be alighting at Wickham and catching a bus from Hunter Streets – the fact that they do not reveals that **forcing a mode change from rail to bus is a second-rate option.**

There is also a possibility that if rail services were cut in anticipation of the planning and construction of the Wickham terminus, that the constraints of the location would become apparent and rail services would be forced to terminate somewhere west of Wickham – perhaps at Broadmeadow. Thus, the problems outlined in Professor Graham Currie's independent review of earlier NSW Government proposals to terminate the rail at Broadmeadow, including the resulting large loss of public transport patronage, would arise. Cutting the rail at Broadmeadow certainly won't make for a seamless interchange.

I feel that Save Our Rail's December 2008 proposal should be seriously considered by the NSW Government as a way of achieving north/south connection whilst retaining the existing rail service uninterrupted to Newcastle Station.

Yours sincerely,
 Michael Micevski