

13 March 2013

58 National Park Street

Hamilton East

2303

Manager Centres and Urban Renewal

Department of Planning & Infrastructure

GPO Box 39

SYDNEY

NSW 2001

NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY 2012 SUBMISSION

Dear sir/madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012. As an urban design tool, the Strategy brings many welcome, innovative public domain treatments to Newcastle city centre. However, the key open space element within the study area, the existing rail corridor, is not incorporated into the open space network.

As NSW Cabinet has determined that the heavy rail is to be removed, the rail corridor in this submission is referred to as 'transport corridor'. Comments in this submission are not to be grouped with those submissions that object to the removal of heavy rail but rather refer to the absence of comment in the Strategy on the function of this central linear space. The use and function of the transport corridor is fundamental to the opening up of the city spatially and also to driving its housing growth through the provision of efficient public transport.

It is agreed that heavy rail presents a physical barrier to movement from the traditional CBD and Hunter Street to the Newcastle Harbour. However, replacing a reliable mode of transport with buses is economically irresponsible and the proposed alternative will not be efficient.

The heavy rail is a barrier because the trains travel at an average of 60 km/hr through intersections. The barrier of the rail line can be overcome through changing the type of rolling stock to one that can give priority to on-road vehicles on Stewart Avenue and future crossings at Steel Street and Worth Place. The rolling stock could take the form of light rail or dual-mode buses running on the existing tracks.

The cost of the proposed Wickham Interchange is estimated to be from \$300 to \$500 million. These funds could be better used to secure adaptable rolling stock given the cost of one light rail unit is estimated at \$1 million. Light rail or dual-modal buses travel at around 12 km/hr which would

establish a shared environment ideal for cycleways. This speed also allows pedestrian and prams to cross the line at any point with suitable treatment to the track.

The proposed bus interchange at Wickham Station will take commuters onto the local road network where buses will be held up at traffic lights on Stewart Avenue, Hunter Street and Honeysuckle Drive. This is an unsustainable transport solution particularly when the Strategy proposes an additional 12,600 more residents in the city centre by 2036. Retaining and improving public transport in the corridor allows operation without competition with the surrounding transport system. In fact utilising the corridor for multi-mode transport will drive the planned increase in population.

The existing rail corridor hands the designers of this new transport and open space system a perfect solution to transporting people through the city. We disagree with the Strategy that Hunter Street should take on the additional transport capacity imposed by removing the heavy rail. The collation of submissions to the Strategy exhibition should contain a recommendation to the Government's steering committee that the corridor should be used for improved public transport not force acceptance of an inadequate exchange for a transport mode that already exists.

Yours sincerely

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[Redacted] and [Redacted] (residents)