

**urbanrenewal - Urban renewal**

---

**From:** "don.o" <don.o@bigpond.net.au>  
**To:** <urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** 3/1/2013 7:24 PM  
**Subject:** Urban renewal

---

15 Bimbae Close  
 Dudley 2290  
 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013

The Manger Centres for Urban Renewal  
 Department of Planning and Infrastructure  
 GPO Box 39  
 Sydney  
 urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir,

## Urban Renewal

When considering a process that will revitalize a city or a CBD it is important to understand why it needs renewal and the realities of the present era.

Newcastle has been in decline for decades for several reasons;

The retail sector has suffered from the "donut" effect, shoppers prefer to go to suburban malls rather than the city. They do so because of the switch to private transport and the resulting need for parking space which cannot be supplied in the CBD. Switching to angle parking or building more parking stations is not the answer. Newcastle must become car free in the best European tradition and install reliable, fast public transport. Closing the existing rail line into the city would be an absurdity.

One of the realities of today is that modern retail business (excluding eateries) has changed dramatically due to "on line" shopping which has cut profitability for conventional shops. The retail business has responded by moving into bulk sales with the hope that quantity of sales rather than quality of service will maintain profits. One result is the move towards "warehouse" type shops as seen in Bunnings, Coles, Woolworths and Aldi. This is an unfortunate trend as we can no longer count on the construction of the type of buildings, like Grace Brothers David Jones or the Queen Victoria buildings in Sydney that gave a city its character. This tendency is amplified by the high cost of land and rentals that preclude big investments in construction of quality buildings.

Newcastle has tried to reverse its decline by concentrating on enticing people into the city with entertainment attractions, but this unfortunately has largely concentrated on venues dispensing alcohol and the consequent unruly behavior has further degraded the city.

Another and more important reality is that corruption is now rife through out institutions we once thought of as pillars of our society. The previous NSW

government is just one example of how corrupting influences can infiltrate due process - it is far from being an isolated case. Wherever there is money to be made there is a risk of corruption and banks, developers, miners and unions have all been implicated.

Newcastle missed a great opportunity of enhancement by the Honeysuckle development but this process was usurped by developers who were able to build Bunnings style all along the water front. The process does however give an insight into the flaws of developer led planning which concentrates on construction of buildings because of the perceived profit and cannot visualize the attractions and advantages of planned open space. If the planners had allowed for an open space of sufficient size for concerts and other outdoor functions the city would have benefited far more than they have done from the ugly display of buildings along the water front.

Cities or towns that have flourished can serve as a guide as to the direction that Newcastle could move. As examples I would point to several towns in the south of WA that have concentrated on development aimed at the tourist market. These towns did not have high population growth and land prices were stable allowing land to be acquired for a variety of purposes, museums, markets, galleries, cycleways, toilet facilities, sports facilities etc that attract tourists. They enjoy funding from the WA lottery system which has profits directed at worthy projects. The advantage is that these improvements benefited locals as well as visitors and towns like Denmark, Esperance and Albany are all very enjoyable to visit as well as to live. On a per capita basis all these towns would have better facilities than Newcastle yet they do not have the same agreeable all year round weather and unlike Newcastle must rely on summer time tourists.

## Conclusions;

Newcastle must move towards greater use of public transport with the eventual aim of achieving a car free city along the lines of those in Europe.

The planning committee must reject the concept that population growth is beneficial to the community or that it can be accommodated by continual expansion of urban sprawl or consolidation.

Planners must take into account future climate changes and incorporate these into the city so the impact of any sea level rises or violent storms are minimized.

Planners must take into account future employment opportunities which will have to take place in an economy with a declining resource sector, a damaged manufacturing sector and declining public sector involvement. Tourism is the one big possibility for this city.

Why can't we design better cities or suburbs? Homeowners don't have any say in how the suburb functions on a day-to-day basis, indeed they are fortunate if they can choose a locality that is close to the things they deem important like parks or oceans rather than freeways or airports.

Architects are limited to external appearance and meeting clients requirements. In the case of housing units this may mean squeezing the maximum amount of apartments out of the smallest cost. Developers have no interest in the environment beyond their cul de sac

or model estate, other than for marketing purposes. And local council planners have to meet state government densities while sweet talking developers and transport planners into trying to create a pleasant street environment where people can safely walk to shop, school or public transport.

We now have at least two generations of Australians who have been forced to live in crowded and often noisy apartment blocks. The blocks have been built by developers to be sold off the plan to buyers or to investors for the rental market. Demand is so high that quality is of secondary importance. Designer suburbs are but a distant dream from a past era. Pedestrian or cycle networks separate from the road system are now frowned on: they cost the developer a little more, and we have become a society paranoid about robbery. The response, the pseudo-gated estates are so dependent on the car that walking anywhere is an affront to capacious house driveways. Children are delivered to school in oversized SUVs and parents clog the so-called freeways to get to work. Individual houses may occasionally be well-designed, but with a handful of exceptions, the new suburbs are not.

Enclosed are addresses to a US study on Infrastructure and a speech made by Andrew McNamara, the former Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability in Queensland. In this there is a section , 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph page 2, that explains the dilemma of States being held responsible for federal decisions. ;

## .Declining Infrastructure, Declining Civilization

August 29, 2010

<http://chronicle.com/article/Declining-Infrastructure/124137/>

[http://qccqld.org.au/docs/Campaigns/State\\_Issues/Andrew%20McNamara%20Speech.pdf](http://qccqld.org.au/docs/Campaigns/State_Issues/Andrew%20McNamara%20Speech.pdf)

Yours faithfully,

Don Owers