



<http://parksandplaygroundsmovement.blogspot.com/>

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The Parks and Playgrounds Movement is a community organisation established in the early 1930s. Its secretary was C E W Bean, the historian, lawyer and journalist. It was brought to Newcastle in 1952 by R.E. (Tom) Farrell, and continues the work to safeguard our Natural and Cultural Heritage. The Movement's early work included the protection of the openspace provisions of the 1952 Northumberland County District Town and Country Planning Scheme.

**Mr Sam Haddad Director General
NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY 2000
16/03/2013**

Dear Sam,

Draft Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 preliminary submission

Parks and Playgrounds Movement would be pleased to respond to the draft document Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 which has been prepared to identify if the inner area of Newcastle should be subjected to Urban Renewal under a State Environmental Planning Policy SEPP (Urban Renewal) 2010. The Movement has watched the revitalisation proposals for Newcastle that started in earnest with the striking of a special rate in 1988 over all the properties within the Newcastle Commercial Business District to support the activities of the Newcastle Citycentre Committee Inc, officially registered 1996 deregistered in 2008; and Newcastle Alliance Inc' registered 2000. The latest recipient of revitalisation funds today is Newcastle Now or the Newcastle Business Improvement Association Inc. registered 2011.

What funds have been collected since 1988 for revitalisation or how the funds have been disbursed or projects completed has never been made clear in public.

And now we have the issues of Urban Renewal at Newcastle totally confused by a recent Government announcement that rail services to Historic Newcastle are to be terminated and buses used to replace trains and that a new transport interchange is to be built at Wickham a suburb of Newcastle. This is further confused by an announcement this week that a new committee has been formed with a budget of \$5 Million dollars to develop a further rail removal proposal! (Newcastle Herald March 12 2013.

The announcement that the rail would be cut to Newcastle and a new Terminal Station and Transport Interchange built at Wickham is the sort of arbitrary decision that is not acceptable as a base for the Newcastle Renewal Strategy 2012. We insist that an

Environmental Impact Statement be exhibited setting out the social and environmental impacts and alternatives to justify this announcement.

This sort of charade has been going on at Newcastle now for 20 years and is generated by the property lobby through the HDC of the earlier Honeysuckle Development Corporation. This Corporation has renewed most of the lands given to the Corporation in 1993 since the approval of the Honeysuckle 'Approved Scheme' by Minister Mr Robert Webster 15/3/93.

Dear Mr Le Marchant

I reply to your letter of 10 March 1993, I wish to convey to you, and the Honeysuckle Board, my full endorsement of the "Scheme" and business plan which you sent me, as required under Section 14 of the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974. I now instruct the Honeysuckle Development Corporation under Section 17 of the Act, to implement the "Scheme".

I would also like you to pass on my congratulations to the other Board members and the Property Services Group team in Newcastle, for their efforts to date and in recently winning a national planning award from the Royal Australian Planning Institute.

My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert Webster', written over the typed name 'Robert Webster'.

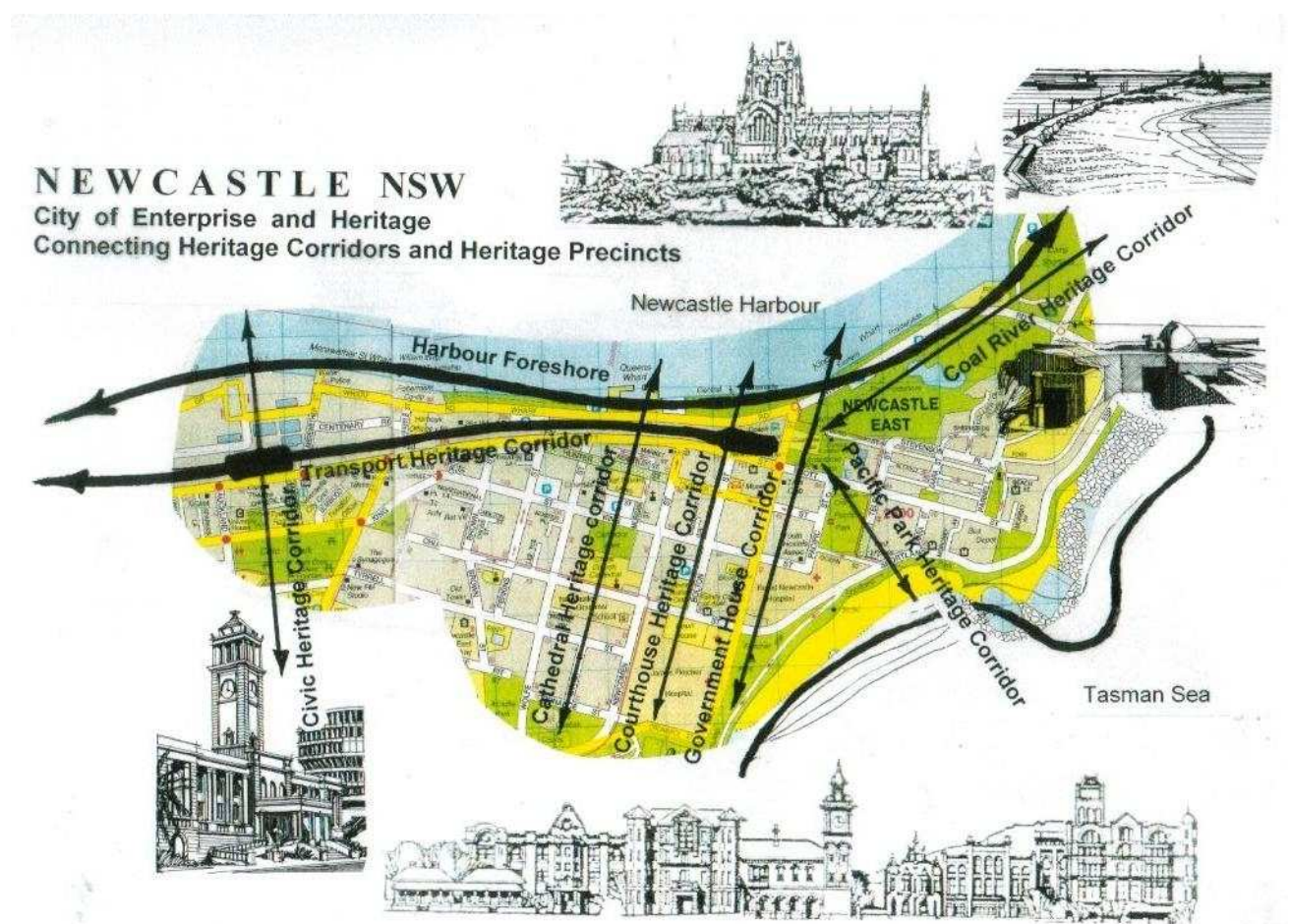
This Scheme prepared under Section 14 of the Growth Centres Act and ordered for implementation under Section 17 of the Act is an embarrassment in that it has never been revised and the HDC has been given reign to do as it pleases without a legal base for its enlarged Growth Centre which now includes the whole Hunter region. Truly the HDC has done good work in the renewal of the former railway yards, Carrington and the Marina Precinct but has failed to implement their key objectives in the Honeysuckle Central Area because their major activities there have been the encouragement of good existing developments away from the traditional CBD. Notable examples are the removal of the Hunter Water, the NSW Planning Department and the Newcastle Museum to key sites in Central Honeysuckle. This has been the opposite of Urban Renewal and the Parks and Playgrounds Movement believes the HDC should be disbanded if it is unable to operate within its own incorporation Act.

Passenger rail services to Newcastle's historic Station are germane to any consideration of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy. The existing passenger rail stations are located in

strategic positions within the identified renewal area and are the current focus areas that should feature in any renewal strategy if it is to be effective. A new rail station at Wickham should not be contemplated until it can be incorporated as part of the new development that is suggested in the strategy.

It is essential that the existing railway and stations be made an integral part of the renewal strategy with improved access to Wickham and Civic Stations as recommended by the Director General of Planning.

There are three principal activity centres that focus on the rail transport spine that is a principal feature of the existing inner urban area of Newcastle. These activity points will remain the principal focus in any meaningful redevelopment strategy.



The diagram above sets out a series of Heritage Corridors that demonstrate how the city focuses on its rail transport spine at Civic and Newcastle. The rail transport spine has been in place for 150 years. The integrity of the city renewal has been held up by the straightjacket of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation and their Approved Scheme and Masterplan and the myopic vision of the property lobby that has been working out of Honeysuckle for nearly twenty years.

As mentioned earlier the announcement that the rail would be cut to Newcastle and a new Terminal Station and Transport Interchange built at Wickham is the sort of arbitrary decision that is not acceptable as a base for the Newcastle Renewal Strategy 2012.

Newcastle has been trying to renew and revitalise in earnest since 1988 when a special rate was struck on all CBD properties. Ironically most of the monies raised have been directed by property interests without broad community support.

Revitalisation is more than removing public infrastructure or moving public building and public services from one place to another.

The Draft Strategy has been released for public consultation and engagement with the community, industry and government stakeholders until 17th March. This is insufficient time for the community as there has been no public consultation prior to the arbitrary announcement suggesting that the government wishes to close the rail connection to Newcastle with no detail of the impact or the nature of the new Transport Development proposed at Wickham.

The proposal to decommission the railway into Newcastle and move the existing terminal station and transport interchange to a new site at Wickham cannot really be taken seriously without a proper plan layout and an Environmental Impact Statement setting out the social and environmental impacts and the proposal suggested for minimising the impact and alternatives that can be considered.

The Newcastle Heritage Railway Station should remain a unique railway destination in the Newcastle urban renewal strategy 2012.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement believe that the NSW Government has acted recklessly in announcing a termination of passenger rail services to historic Newcastle Station at the same time announcing a new transport interchange will be built at Wickham, a suburb of Newcastle, with buses replacing trains. This announcement has been imposed over the recently released Draft Newcastle Renewal Strategy 2012 and will taint any outcome from that strategy.

An Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared before a decision can be finalised for moving Newcastle's existing terminal railway station and its bus interchange to a new station and Transport Interchange to be built at Wickham. The premature announcement disregards the rights of the disabled, the young and the elderly, indeed all railway users and the people of the region and disregards the likely social and environmental impact on the region.

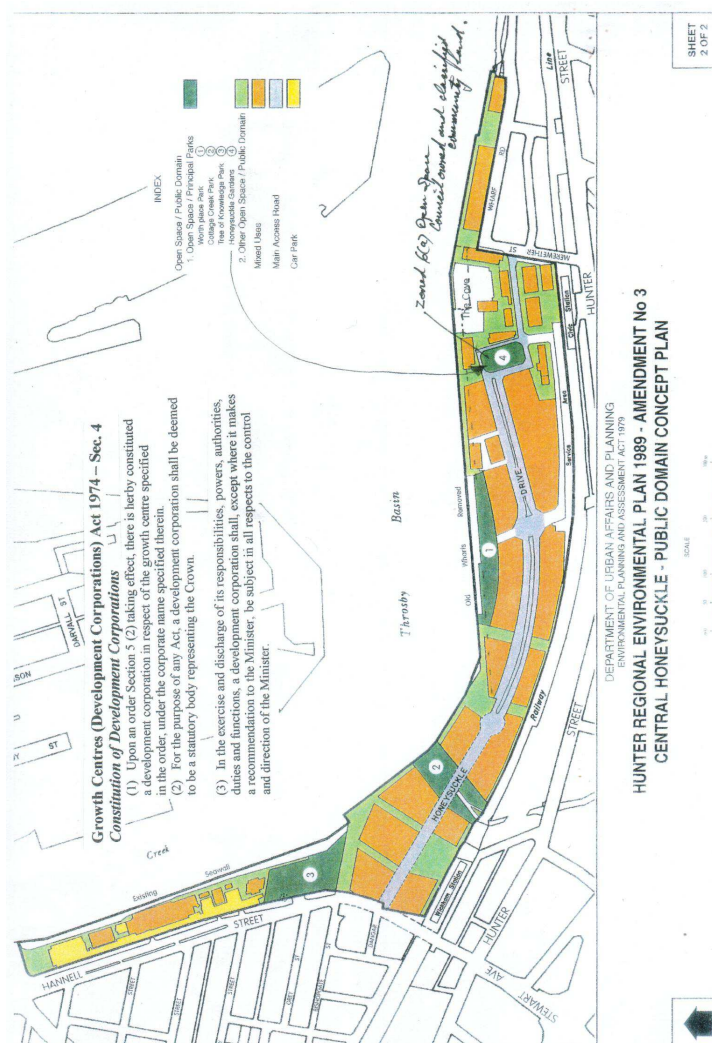
The likely social and environmental impacts have not been identified or alternative proposals properly assessed.

Concerning cross rail connectivity:

In recent years Honeysuckle Development Corporation (Now Hunter Dev. Corp.) has overseen the removal of 3 pedestrian over-bridges and 2 vehicular level crossings.

The Over-bridges were at Bolton St, Worth Pl. and Cooper St. and the Level crossings were at Hannell St. and Market St. These connective facilities were no doubt removed because of the out of date Honeysuckle Approved Scheme which intended in 1993 to shift the Newcastle Terminal station to Civic as part of the Scheme and attached Masterplan.

The relevant Minister should be asked to direct the HDC to vary their approved scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Growth Centres (development corporations) Act sections 14, 15, and 16 under which they are constituted. A previous Minister should have directed this action following the making of the Hunter Regional Environmental Plan (Amendment No3) Central Honeysuckle in 1997.



Under today's circumstances the two new replacement Level Crossings should be completed at Steel Street and Worth Place. (The roads each side of the railway have been in place for many years) and the three pedestrian over-bridges should be replaced at convenient locations between Wickham and Newcastle. This is long overdue and must be part of the 2012 renewal strategy for immediate implementation. Design planning for road traffic and grade separation at Stewart Ave and possible rail under or over-pass should have been undertaken as part of the renewal strategy.



Above: 1981 Harbour foreshore Scheme proposed pedestrian concourse to replace the Level Crossing shown below



Market Street Level Crossing Newcastle Herald photo 1981

Newcastle Rail Station Heritage importance & accessibility:

The Newcastle Railway Station is a heritage place having the distinction of being a unique terminal station of the Great Northern Railway which is the second passenger rail system in NSW (Newcastle to Maitland-1857). The existing station is beautifully situated in the heart of historic Newcastle close to the harbour Foreshore and the Newcastle Beaches. It is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register and is surrounded by other State Heritage Items including the Coal River Precinct, Nobbys Headland and Fort Scratchley and the Convict Lumber Yard. The wonderful Customs House with its distinctive clock tower and Time Ball and the Great Northern Hotel are heritage listed sites adjacent to the station. Many elderly and

disabled people as well as commuters from the Central Coast and from the Hunter Valley including Maitland travel to Newcastle rail station to access this unique destination and appreciate its excellent accessible platforms with their easy access to the harbour and Stockton Ferry and the existing bus interchange.

We ask that the announcement regarding passenger Rail to Newcastle be reconsidered and the passenger rail services be made a feature of the final Renewal Strategy with improved pedestrian access to Wickham and Civic Stations as recommended by Director General of Planning in the Renewal Strategy and the replacement of the connectivity removed in recent decades.

The legal machinery to correct this situation must be invoked by directing the Hunter Development Corporation to review its "Approved Scheme" which is totally inappropriate for its widened responsibility over the whole Hunter Region. Furthermore the appropriate Minister should direct the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to prepare the necessary Environmental Impact Statement to identify the likely social and environmental impacts if it is proposed to decommission passenger rail facilities at Newcastle and build a replacement Transport Interchange at Wickham.

The removal the 150 year old passenger rail system into Newcastle and the moving of the existing Bus Interchange and the Terminal Station to Wickham requires a professional Environmental Impact Statement to identify and consider the likely environmental and social impact on Newcastle and the region.

We trust that the NSW Government will consider the views of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement and make the passenger rail services to the existing heritage Newcastle Station a feature of the Newcastle Renewal Strategy with improved pedestrian access to Wickham and Civic Stations as recommended.

The public Domain with its public reserves and community land and the Heritage aspect of the Old Town demand very special attention and protection if a Renewal Strategy is to have any meaning and gain public support. The suggested height limits that were wrongly proposed to facilitate the hopeless GPT project must be reduced to something like the existing heights to maintain views to and from the Cathedral. Also major new foreshore park land must be set aside in the area from Wickham to Civic with the ugly open car parks removed from the foreshore.

It is disappointing that the Renewal Strategy has been proposed without any meaningful public consultation with the community.

Beware! Newcastle Harbour Foreshore – Under Threat

The Joy Cummings Scheme Vs the Honeysuckle Scheme



Insert: Illustration of how Queen's Wharf was meant to be.

The implementation of the Joy Cummings Foreshore scheme was subverted after Joy suffered a stroke, 1984. Honeysuckle Development Corporation 1992 scheme has never been altered. It closes the railway, blocks Wharf Road, and takes over the historic Newcastle Station area through to the waterfront for Hotel, Retail and other Mixed Uses development. Honeysuckle Masterplan 'D' below is the reason why rail services to Newcastle are under threat. The Honeysuckle Scheme must be 'Varied' to maintain passenger rail services to serve the historic Newcastle Station.

Honeysuckle Masterplan Precinct 'D'



Illustration at the top of the page:
The 1981 Newcastle Harbour Foreshore Urban design Competition winning entry Layout (Area 1) featuring scenic rail corridor to Historic Newcastle Station was widely supported but only partly implemented. Joy Cummings AO Lord Mayor.

Parks and Playgrounds movement supports the retention of rail services to Newcastle and the revision and full implementation of the Joy Cummings Newcastle Harbour foreshore Scheme. We call upon the NSW State Government to vary the 1992 Honeysuckle Masterplan using Sec 16 of the Growth Centres Act and retain rail services to the historic Newcastle station. All the previous rail crossings, pedestrian and vehicular should be re-established and new crossings built as needed.

We oppose the removal of rail services and the closing and redirection of Wharf Road and the alienation of the Harbour Front and the railway station area for Hotel, Retail and Mixed uses as proposed in the Honeysuckle approved scheme 'D'.

Doug Lithgow, President, Parks and Playgrounds Movement Inc. Box 373 Hamilton NSW 2303



Newcastle Railway Station is a heritage place of distinction with many State Heritage listed Items nearby



Scenic railway entrance to Newcastle as proposed in the 1981 Newcastle Urban design & Harbour Foreshore Scheme

Newcastle is indeed lucky to have intact significant heritage including its convict coal mining adits below Fort Scratchley and its birth site of the 1801 encampment below what is now Fort Scratchley. Newcastle's maritime and harbour development and its coal mining and its AA Company coal loading railway near the Brown Street axis and its Great Northern Railway between Newcastle and Maitland are important developments that have shaped the unique and attractive character of the city. The Draft Renewal Strategy is ignorant in that it has not given sufficient focus on the historic morphology of the City.

We were pleased that the historic Victoria Theatre which was Newcastle's premier theatre has been mentioned in the Strategy. It is an essential part of the cultural fabric of Newcastle. The theatre has contributed greatly to the life of Newcastle and with its rich history should continue to contribute to the future cultural life of the city. It is located within the original Newcastle 'Old Town' at Perkins Street and was important as a Live Theatre and social hub of the town.

Newcastle has identified the need for a medium size theatre and the Victoria Theatre with its extraordinary history, architecture and crystal clear acoustics is in an ideal location to be restored as a theatre.

It has magnificent atmosphere created by its dome in the ceiling above an ornate proscenium arch and its dress circle with the lounge foyer and the large fly-tower above the stage. It would present a practical proposition to an enterprising entrepreneur providing its essential fabric is maintained and restored.

The Victoria Theatre is adjacent to railway, bus, ferry public transport, to parking stations, the Hunter Street Mall, the C.B.D., beaches and foreshore.

The historic Victoria Theatre is the last of the acoustic theatres left in N.S.W. and should be bought and restored as a central base for e.g. theatre, Opera, dance companies, cinema, local performance companies.

In Ballarat, Her Majesty's Theatre is a good example for a restoration of the Newcastle Victoria Theatre. Melbourne has also been very successful in restoring historic theatre buildings in recent years, giving them all a new lease of life and a tourism drawcard for Victoria (the state). Melbourne also has the modern State Performing Arts Complex.

It is appalling that the strategy doesn't mention the mistakes of Honeysuckle Corp, for example in buying the longshore wharfs and removing them. The building out the Flinders Cove project which was a feature of the 1993 Civic Design proposal was a mistake as was the destruction of the view corridor from Merewether Street to the harbour with the ugly Crown Plaza Hotel development.

The Movement objects strongly that the strategy did not have as a solid base an understanding and clear identification of the good features of the City like its passenger rail

corridor. It did not make a clear analysis and identification of the City's Heritage and make practical suggestions for the protection of its fabric and official identification such as restriction to the height of building around the Cathedral which is our most prominent heritage building.

Furthermore the Renewal Strategy made no effort to identify clearly the mistake of moving established entities from existing fully operating precincts to new areas like Honeysuckle without good reason. Examples include the removing of the Museum from its established site, (which had adequate area for expansion and access) to the restricted Civic workshop buildings where new building within the heritage buildings had to be constructed. It could have been so much more successful at Wickham. There is also the crazy road pattern at Honeysuckle which has effectively strangled the original Wharf Rd that was identified as an important part of the transport Spine in Newcastle Planning Strategy Documents prior to the Honeysuckle Development.

The latest major mistake is of course the moving of the Courthouse precinct to Civic which will be difficult and costly to rectify now.

It is too obvious that the Draft Renewal Strategy has had no community input and should be thoroughly revised before it is re-exhibited as a practical vision for Newcastle's Renewal with the retention of the passenger rail spine and the focus on the existing rail stations as the activity centres. There must be proper recognition of the mistakes of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation. We demand new initiatives for a people friendly city.

Property Developers and Politicians do not make good future planners.

Clearly there is much to be done to revise the 2012 Renewal Strategy and the Parks and Playgrounds Movement will be pleased to make further submissions.

Yours faithfully

Doug Lithgow President

Parks and Playgrounds Movement