

Ian Searston
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23rd March 2013



The Hon. Brad Hazzard, M.L.A.,
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

Dear Mr Hazzard

I am writing to express my concern at the recently announced decision to cut the rail services into Newcastle west of Wickham. It appears to me that this decision has been based on the following two main reasons;

1. The need to prevent traffic interruptions caused by the rail gates when trains are passing and
2. the perceived need to "open the city up to the harbour".

The first would be solved much more cheaply and easily by building an overpass over the rail line at Stewart Avenue. The second has already been contradicted by developments right on the harbour in the Civic area, thus preventing access to the harbour in this area.

In addition the following reasons also show why this decision is the wrong one.

1. The decision has been largely driven by a group called the Newcastle Alliance which is an unrepresentative group of business people. The large majority of train users are people from outside Newcastle coming to the city to work and who would wish to travel directly into city without the need to change modes of transport.
2. The new law courts will be based in the Civic Precinct and will be well served by the current Civic Station as are the new office blocks in the Honeysuckle area.
3. The University of Newcastle is working towards expanding its presence in the City. It already has its Music School and part of its Business and Law School in the Civic area. It makes little sense to expect students (and staff) travelling between the Civic campus and the main campus at Callaghan to travel by bus and train when a direct service already exists between Civic station and Warrabrook, the University station. According to the current timetable it takes only 11 minutes to travel between these stations and a further 5 minutes to walk to the Hunter buildings or 10 minutes to the

Shortland buildings. It would not be possible for road transport to cover the distance in that time.

4. The current station buildings at Civic and Newcastle (especially Newcastle) are fine buildings and it would be a disgrace to see them fall into disuse and disrepair as has happened to the grand Newcastle Post Office building.

For these reasons I urge you to reverse this decision before public money that could be spent much more usefully and wisely in other areas of Newcastle is wasted on a project that will cause more problems than it solves.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ian Searston". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely" text.

Ian Searston