

Susan Kiprovich

From: Michael Somerville <somerville.mj@optusnet.com.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 January 2013 10:42 PM
Cc: office@berejikilian.minister.nsw.gov.au; Public Hazzard's Office Email; Public Gallacher's Office Email
Subject: Fw: Wickham to Newcastle rail closure
Attachments: Train line letter.docx

Dear Minister,

Please find attached a copy of my concerns regarding the proposed Wickham to Newcastle rail closure.

Thank you for your time

Michael Somerville

Michael J Somerville

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Wednesday 16 January 2013

Dear Minister,

Please consider my request to change the decision to close the railway line between Wickham and Newcastle stations in the Lower Hunter Valley. There are a number of reasons why many want the line closed, however I believe there are many more relevant issues at stake which should be considered before final approval is granted. The following are examples of ways that would affect me should the Wickham to Newcastle railway line close:

- I use the railway line in to Newcastle station on a regular basis, along with my mother who due to age is losing her mobility, We use this service for a number of reasons but mainly to attend meetings, suppliers and other personal reasons. The train is very convenient, provides us with transport straight to the location that we require, and with my mother's mobility it means that I can get her there without the need for stairs or other obstacles.
- The bus system in the Newcastle CBD area is extremely congested already. I recall for a few weeks toward the end of 2012 the train line was closed due to track work being carried out on the line, and people needing to either use buses to reach where the trains terminate at Newcastle Station, or else use their own private transport. The result was an excessive amount of additional traffic along Hunter Street, turmoil and confusion as people were everywhere not least to mention addition of time to everyone's day due to the congested bus services and also the problem of locating parking and the additional parking costs. Unfortunately the decline of the surface of Hunter Street also doesn't lend itself to higher traffic movements with additional buses and cars which will reduce the surface quality of Hunter Street even further.
- Car parking in the CBD area is extremely limited and unrealistic pricing for parking would mean additional costs on my already tight transport budget, along with the concern constantly of being booked for an overstay.
- This isn't a problem when I can take the train and then return when required. Even when I take my bicycle with me on the train to reach other areas within the city during my visit there is no problem with this, however this would be impossible on a bus.
- I recall someone mentioning recently they were upset that previous infrastructure was taken away years ago, that is the tram system, and there has been a call to return it. Imagine the costs in the future should we decide to reinstate the rail line because we got it all wrong? Why get rid of something that is pure and heritage-based along with the fact that it provides a service?! Also, from an environmental point, the more people we can get on the train the better to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
- Not only that, but it has only been recently that the platforms on the stations have been extended to cater for the Sydney trains, this has cost a huge amount of money and should the tax payer be expected to keep paying for these inconsistencies? – In my opinion, this would seem like money down the drain if these were then made redundant.
- While the decision whether to close the railway line is still in progress, please consider this decision and the massive impact that it will have on the people of the wider region. Please consider that not everyone has access to

their own private transport and that the trains provide an important link to the city from outlying areas especially those people who rely on the public transport system.

- Trains are such a fast, efficient and highly regarded service. In planning and developing the infrastructure for the future of Newcastle and the region, there should be more trains and rail networks being built for the region, not less. We have fast developing housing areas to the west of Newcastle CBD with very limited access to public transport especially around the Fletcher, Cameron Park, and Holmesville area. There is a rail corridor quite close to these suburbs which was owned by J & A Brown mining which has been given to the Richmond Vale Railway Museum. In my opinion, money would be better spent supplying essential rail services to these outlying areas which in turn could also support the Richmond Vale Railway Museum in providing a tourist rail service for tourists and local people. We also have an airport with no rail access and other popular tourist areas such as Port Stephens which could be included into a rail network loop. It always astounds me that the planning ministers for the Sydney areas can see the great value in a rail network which services its people yet in Newcastle we have limited rail networks in place to meet the needs of its people and are considering closing a line which makes the accessibility to the CBD and beach areas so much more convenient for its people.

I thank you for your time to read and understand the reasons why I oppose such a proposal as to close the line. If you need me to clarify anything you have read in my letter please don't hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing all about how you will oppose any decision to close the Newcastle to Wickham railway line.

Yours sincerely

Michael Somerville