

**urbanrenewal - NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY**

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**SUBMISSION REGARDING THE NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT'S NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY**

**The NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY as presented has many desirable features that would be of enormous benefit to the City of Newcastle.**

**There are, however many disturbing factors surrounding the presentation of this document, not the least of which the lack of detail in how these changes would occur.**

**Nor does there seem to be any recognition of the widespread effects on the people of the region or any recognition of the numerous projects more deserving of funding in the area that would seem to be of greater importance than removing valuable infrastructure**

**The single most disturbing feature is the proposed termination of the rail line at Wickham and the creation of a transport interchange in that vicinity.**

**There has been virtually no public submissions taken into account on this issue, despite the Premier promising the future of the rail line would rest with the people of Newcastle.**

**The current state member for Newcastle repeatedly refuses to address the concerns of people regarding this issue. Every attempt to raise this issue has been repeatedly negated by this MP and the Minister for Transport.**

**Now there has been a strategy released and the public asked for responses and the Minister has announced, prematurely it seems, that the rail line will be cut.**

**Democracy seems to be a side issue with the members of this government.**

**There has been a veil of secrecy surrounding this issue that beggars belief in our view. At a an arranged public transport forum held in Newcastle all but one of the tables asked to express an opinion on the strategy all but one supported the retention of the rail in its current form. This was not acknowledged nor reported on by any media.**

**At no time has anyone asked the users outside the City for an opinion on the closure of the line. People from the Lower Hunter and Lake Macquarie have been ignored and they are the people, along with travelers from Sydney and tourists, that will be most disadvantaged by the closure of the line from Wickham to Newcastle.**

**Nowhere in the document has any mention been made of difficulties of handicapped, infirm, elderly and pensioners, pregnant women or women with prams having made a journey then having to change to alternative and less user friendly transport for three kilometers. The effect on these people and anyone carrying suit cases or other bulky possessions is profound.**

There also seems to be no consideration given to the possibility of a large increase in the mobile population in Newcastle itself. The Law precinct and the possible University of Newcastle campus additions will put much greater pressure on public transport and car parking facilities.

It is not good enough to make vague statements like training people to use cars less or restrict the use of cars in the CBD when the only efficient large scale mover of people is to be removed. These statements would seem to be naïve in the extreme and were perhaps developed by a consultant that has never been to Newcastle nor ever had to change transport options for such a short distance.

One could only wonder if the good people of Sydney were forced to exit a rail service at Redfern and have to catch a bus to Central.

The geographical features of the Newcastle peninsular are unique and it seems that the type of journeys taken there have not been studied. Many people use the rail to travel as close as possible to the uniqueness of the regions beaches and other attractions. These journeys will stay the same regardless of the line staying or going. The end result will be a significant increase in the amount of cars traveling there and if anyone had cared to notice, the beach area parking is fully utilized any sunny weekend day.

This point brings into focus what seems to be a contradiction in the strategy, on one hand the strategy claims to increase the use of public transport and utilization of public transport but then removes what would be a perfect solution to many of the traffic problems in the city.

This strategy does not only affect the people of Newcastle, it also affects those that live outside the CBD and those that travel there for any reason.

Every one would be supportive of a modern and functional city, one that has the features mentioned in the strategy. There would be less dissent if the reason for removing the last three kilometers of track were revealed and debated, but the reason has never been stated. It has never been made clear exactly why the rail needs to be truncated at Wickham and the desirable developments made around the infrastructure. Nor has there ever been an alternative strategy proposed or discussed.

From this we can see that this government is not serious about public comment regarding projects nor does it seem to be willing to lift the veil of secrecy that surrounds this and other state projects despite the statements of transparency and public consultation often made.

It seems the government has underestimated the depth of concern and despair this decision has engendered. Many people are disgusted by the decision and the way it has been implemented and made before the results of public submissions.

We urge the government to reverse the decision to truncate the rail line at Wickham and let Newcastle re-develop with a reasonable public transport infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission

Yours sincerely

Kevin and Wendy Stokes

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