

42 Hunter Street
Stockton
NSW 2295

3 December 2012

The Hon Mike Gallacher
Minister for the Hunter
NSW Parliament

Dear Mr Gallacher

As a resident of Stockton (across the Harbour from Newcastle city centre), I am writing to you about the Newcastle rail line because I know there are huge numbers of people who live in the Hunter who have similar concerns about its threatened closure.

You will no doubt have heard the numerous reasons why people like myself (and huge numbers of other local residents, as well as those further up the Valley) wish to retain the line right into Newcastle. I regularly catch the train from Newcastle to Sydney and return, even though I own a car. However, there are many people who totally rely on rail as their major transport beyond Newcastle.

I have been a Stockton local nearly all my 65 years, apart from six years away from Newcastle. The rail line into Newcastle has always been an essential fixture of my life and those of my family members, many of whom also live on Stockton. It has never been seen as a barrier to the city by any of us. As a member of the Stockton & District Probus Club, the Stockton RSL and St Peter's Church community (among other community groups), I can vouch for the importance of the retention of the rail line for thousands of people.

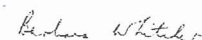
The convenience of railway access in inner Newcastle is important for more than Stockton people. The elderly who no longer own cars, the young who wish to access the beach, the students who travel to study at the Conservatorium or Hunter Street TAFE, the people who visit Newcastle Court House, are just some of those who need the heavy rail retained into Newcastle station.

There are some people who would like heavy rail replaced by light rail. But when would this happen? My fear - shared by many - is that the heavy rail will get ripped up and nothing else will happen, because where would the money come for light rail?

The closure of Newcastle Hospital, the rise of large suburban shopping complexes, the move to Honeysuckle of many businesses and the departure of David Jones, are among the significant reasons why there have been changes to the retail centre of the city. It has not been the fault of the heavy rail which has been there for many decades.

Please retain the passenger rail into Newcastle!

Yours sincerely



Barbara Whitcher