

The lettering on the cover of the Draft Plan suggests that the plan is for elsewhere. Hunter City is not a destination as Newcastle is. To rob us of our name on the casual decision of a meeting of planners (as described at a recent public meeting) is to rob us of our identity. To name is to confer power so the renaming of Newcastle moves the power of decision-making to the planners. It strips Newcastle of its voice, its heritage, its history. The use of 'Newcastle' and Greater Newcastle' reflects an easily comprehensible reality as Hunter City does not and cannot.

Being robbed of a voice is a strong reaction to the results of the long processes of consultation in various forms which have been marked by a lack of genuine interchange. It would seem, to use a homely analogy, that the shoe has not been custom made but it is the only one on offer. We have to fit the shoe. To walk in this shoe is to experience city 'unliveability'.

A city where people want to live is a city where people can move about freely. There is still no adequate basic transport plan for Newcastle let alone the area of Greater Newcastle. The premature and unnecessary cutting of the rail in the name of connectivity to the Harbour was a retrograde move. Peak hour crawl is now a feature of city life as is growing competition for parking. We have been promised light rail – 2.5 kilometres along busy Hunter Street. This defies rationality when the rail corridor could service a cycle track and light rail at a fraction of the cost. It could also be the basis for expanding the service to Greater Newcastle. We welcome light rail where rational planning suggests it should be on the corridor. The growing city with thousands of people using the new university and law courts demands an expanded and co-ordinated transport service. In this scenario the proposed demolition of Civic station is vandalism.

The future of the rail corridor is a lynch pin in a satisfactory solution to the future of transport on Newcastle. The rail corridor land should not be squandered but should be kept for use now and in the future to ensure possible transport expanded planning, yet the government's plans for the corridor lack credibility and transparency. It is as if a brotherhood of Victorian fathers believe it is in the best interest of their children i.e. the citizens of Newcastle, not to tell them about reality for 'They'll find out soon enough.'

The reliance on buses has a retrograde effect on the quality of city life. The bus stops in Darby Street, for example, advertises the city service until 6 PM. Reliance on the bus makes for a city of oldies staying home to watch TV in the evening. This is not the vibrant city we have been promised.

The establishment of the New Mine Grouting Fund is the result of a morally bankrupt approach to development. Taxpayers should not be expected to bear the financial burden of supporting developers. Theirs is the profit. They should pay.



Connectivity, once the buzz word to support removal of the rail, should be brought back to mean greater connectivity between Newcastle and the region. There are plans that demonstrate, with foresight, how easily Newcastle could be connected to the region and to the State beyond.

The lease of the Port of Newcastle bears testimony to the lack of wisdom and lack of business credentials of the government. Five years profit would cover the leasing price so 120 million allocated to the City Centre rubs vinegar into the wounds. Even 1 million from the fund for community projects does little to balance our loss.

The 'Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City' is a slick publication with its seductive images and persuasive language. However it is not convincing for it belies the very criterion of modern city liveability i.e. getting from here to there and back. The draft plan is 'arse about'. It must be preceded by a satisfactory transport plan rather than the cobbled together interim arrangements we have now.