

Individual submission in response to the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan Feb 2018

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Many serious planning mistakes have been made in recent years, so it is with a jaundiced view that I read the draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan. Planning mistakes include the destruction of public transport by the removal of the railway to Newcastle, damage to Hunter St by locating the light rail there, damage to business and the community by hosting the car race, failure to locate the transport interchange on the obvious gas works site, and wasting a large amount of money on a poorly designed light rail system that only runs 2 Km. These decisions have been made by small groups of decision makers, against considerable community opposition so many in Newcastle have consultation fatigue. After putting in the time and energy to have their say, community members end up feeling that nobody ever listens so whats the point?

Four outcomes are listed, but none of them address the economic basis for employment in Newcastle. The plan should recognise the demise of coal and the need for new industries such as an import/export terminal for containers and a diversity of bulk goods, the opportunities in the clean energy economy, and the future of manufacturing after coal.

The cruise ship terminal

International shipping is a substantial contributor to air pollution as the bunker fuel used is of exceptionally low quality. The sulphur content of bunker fuel can be up to 3.5%, which is 3500 times higher than the limit for sulphur in fuel allowed on the roads, and it often also has heavy metal impurities. While at berth a cruise ship consumes a great amount of electricity to keep the air conditioners, freezers and lights running, so while berthed it is like a small power station putting out smoke into the local air which is not far from residences. This has caused a major problem at White Bay in Sydney and will be a problem for Newcastle as the number of cruise ships increases. The only good solution is to mandate the use of shore power while ships are berthed. So called "cold ironing" is required by many ports in Europe, so many of the ships are equipped for this. We are not a third world country, we don't have to exchange our air quality and public health for a few restaurant meal and trinket sales.



Strategy 1.1

Hunter Development Corporation has made such a mess of inner city revitalisation that they should be removed from any involvement in provision of public transport. The focus on just the inner city area means they have no skills or capacity to ensure high quality and convenient public transport connections to outer areas and to Sydney.

Activating the waterfront should be within HDC's capacity, and the first thing would be to fix the connectivity problem of the waterfront walkway/cycleway at Queens wharf. The food and alcohol establishments there make it difficult for people travelling along the waterfront. Cyclists either ride between restaurant tables, or go on the south side between pavement obstructions, a bus stop, rubbish bins, broken glass, drunk patrons, and concealed doors that open to obstruct the cycleway. This is a problem that needs urgent attention, and people have already been injured due to the poor design.

Strategy 1.2

Much is made of the airport, but it is currently crippled by the lack of transport choices to reach the terminal. The \$75 taxi fare from central Newcastle is prohibitive, but there is no effective bus service and no cycleway or under cover bicycle parking. A modern airport should have an attached train station, but that will never happen for Newcastle, limiting its eventual potential as a regional airport. The plan suggests that "improved public transport connections to be investigated". Surely it is the job of a plan to suggest a solution rather than just an investigation.

Many fit young men cycle to the RAAF base, which is just 15 Km from Stockton Wharf, but it is a road unsuited to cycling, with high vehicle speeds and a narrow shoulder. There is plenty of room for a separated cycleway.

Strategy 4

The Richmond Vale Rail Trail is a major opportunity for tourism and for active transport but gets hardly a mention in the plan. The RVRT promotes active transport and active tourism with its associated health benefits. It links to the wine region so will be an attractive day tour out of Newcastle for more active visitors. It will include many historic sites that maintain the regional link to industrial history as the coal industry transitions into the museum phase.

Outcome 2: The state government spends large amounts of money on sports stadiums that sit empty 90% of the time, and when used promote obesity through sedentary recreation, junk food, and beer intake. Spending on stadiums should be redirected to active and participatory recreation and to active transport even though these activities do not attract television audiences.

Strategy 4.1 The intention to provide commuter parking at rail stations should include secure under cover bicycle parking modelled along the lines of the "Parkiteer" system used in Melbourne. This provides commuter parking at 1/10th the cost of providing car parking, and should be provided in at equal numbers to car spaces.

On page 63 there is a brief suggestion to develop cycleways. Extensive work has been done by the Newcastle community and both Newcastle and Lake Macquarie councils on the Cycle Safe Network proposal. This plan for a network of 150Km of safe cycleways across the two LGAs would equip the city with a high quality active transport system with attendant health, environment and social benefits and should be referenced in the Metropolitan Plan.

Newcastle Port

The existence of coal stockpiles in close proximity to residential areas of Carrington and Tighes Hill creates problems of noise and air pollution. Closing the Carrington coal terminal would be a logical first step in the wind up of the thermal coal export industry. The Kooragang terminals have sufficient excess capacity for the phase out period.

The plan mentions the development of expanding port operations to include general cargo, but not the punitive levy imposed by the state government on any future container operations in Newcastle. This was imposed during the sale of Port Botany and is generally regarded as hobbling the opportunities for Newcastle. Is this restriction still in place? If so, why include unrealistic ideas in the Metropolitan Plan? The status of that penalty on Newcastle business opportunities should be discussed in the plan.

Mistakes and typos:

Figure 7 suggests there is a cycleway along the road on Kooragang Island. This completely incorrect. That is a very dangerous road that a cyclist would be foolish to use.