



Save Our Rail NSW Inc  
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## SUBMISSION RE UNIVERSITY INNER CITY CAMPUS

### INTRODUCTION

Save Our Rail is a group of volunteers, non-aligned with any political party, whose aim is to improve public transport, retention of valuable infrastructure and a current focus on opposing the removal of the Newcastle Rail Line. Save Our Rail favours development and a positive future for Newcastle and the Hunter Region.

On the basis of surveys the group reflects the community's need for efficient public transport to the coastal and city amenities and access to educational and employment opportunities which Newcastle offers. SOR recognises the importance of Newcastle's direct link to Sydney, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Central Coast and other centres such as inland Hunter regional towns via the current provision of intercity train services. In this context the future prospects of Newcastle are enhanced by the presence of the existing rail line direct to Newcastle Station.

### NeW SPACE PROJECT UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE.

SOR acknowledges that The NeW Space Project will bring additional students and staff into the city centre and that this could achieve one of the needs of the city; the need to bring more people in so that it remains as a major centre.

Save Our Rail argues that the rail provision has the capability for the long haul to transport the critical mass of people needed for a vibrant city from distant centres and has the required capacity as a mass transit mode.

The question of whether it was a wise decision for the University of Newcastle to undertake expansion in the Hunter street location is one on which SOR has not adopted a position.

In consideration that there is ample space for the Callaghan Campus to have provided land for its expansion and that student living quarters are situated on site, it would seem to have been a decision made with outside influence and not necessarily one which would be most beneficial to the University. Certainly it would seem to be a costly option economically. The then Auditor General, Peter Achterstraat questioned the benefit to the university and recommended a cost/benefit analysis be undertaken to compare this proposal with a Callaghan solution. ( Newcastle Herald 16/06/10)

It could be suggested that the development orientated groups, such as the Hunter Development Corporation, the Hunter Chapter of the Property Council, the Hunter Business Chamber and the Callaghan Institute may have exerted influence on university



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decision makers, in order to enhance the development opportunities of the central Newcastle precinct, which these groups have been promoting.

These groups depend for their existence on development so there is a vested interest. In much the same way the Government has been influenced to make a decision to cut off the major public transport provision to this area, seemingly to allow development on the rail line land, being almost the only non-undermined land in the Newcastle LGA.

The fact that a Government decision has been made to cut off the rail transport to Civic Station, opposite the University site, and in fact to demolish the station, should be of concern to the University of Newcastle management and staff, in consideration of the absence of any parking provision. The University of Newcastle should be agitating for the retention of this existing direct transport option on behalf of the students and staff, just as the University of NSW has been lobbying for a rail transport link for some years. ( "Rail Link essential to attract students says UNSW head," SMH 21/09/09)

Newcastle has the advantage of this direct rail connection and if retained could allow a link between the new between the two existing campuses, Callaghan and Ourimbah with the new facility. This advantage should not be squandered.

Save Our Rail is conscious of heritage issues and recognises the value of the stock of fine 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings located in this part of the city, which provide charm and are a magnet for tourism. Buildings similar to these have been recently restored and promoted as tourist attractions in other NSW towns such as Ballina, Murwillumbah and Bellingen. These places are advancing as a result.

Newcastle has allowed its image to be downgraded by the unsightly buildings in the Honeysuckle development. This has already begun the uglification of the city. Cities such as Paris would not have allowed these unsympathetic structures to have been built, especially in prime harbour –side positions.

The design of the proposed NeW Space project is out of character with the existing older section of Newcastle, into which it is being interposed. Unlike newer cities, Newcastle is fortunate to have many examples of early Australian architecture, which need to be treasured and enhanced with sympathetic development.

The jutting angular outline of this proposed building which could be interesting and stimulating in a different setting, will be a jarring influence in this location. It will not add to the city's attractiveness, nor do justice to the boldness and cute craziness of its design, which needs a larger site and an uninterrupted view, which is not possible in narrow Hunter Street.



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In fact it will look totally out of place among the graceful architecture of an important heritage city, dominated as it is and should continue to be by the magnificent Christ Church Cathedral on the hill.

If the University of Newcastle is to persist with its plans for the Hunter Street site, it should seriously re-consider the design and look to architecture more sympathetic to the surrounding “Old Newcastle” precinct, so valued by the community. This jagged mechanical looking structure will never be appropriate and will be reviled and ridiculed into the future, just as the Crowne Plaza is.

The University of Newcastle needs to bring credit to itself and the city of Newcastle.

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