

SUBMISSION RE HEXHAM RAIL PROJECT

SAVE OUR RAIL NSW INC

I am lodging this submission in opposition to the proposed increase of rail roads at Hexham.

The following reasons cause concern to the community organisation I represent:

1. High Speed Rail

At this time there are proposals being considered for some form of High Speed Rail. This project could be a considerable factor in any decision to bring such a proposal to fruition. As Hexham is a very constricted space between the Hunter River and the Hexham Swamp it would be difficult to physically accommodate a HSR in this location if the freight lines are massively increased. This could strangle a proposal which could be of great benefit to the entire east coast of NSW.

2. Future passenger rail needs.

The Lower Hunter Strategy predicted a huge rise in population in the region to approximately double its present population.

This will require additional rail provision yet the document indicates the same number of passenger train numbers for 2014 as are currently provided. This is unrealistic, as there is a growing need for better provision of trains in the present situation. Communities on the Hunter Lines – Newcastle to Scone and Newcastle to Dungog are requiring increased frequency of service. These needs have been put forward by community organisations such as Two More trains for Singleton and Save Our Rail and are supported by various local councils.

3. Hexham Station Future

Hexham is a crucial transport junction where it could be assumed passengers from Raymond Terrace could link to the rail system.

Proposals have suggested the provision of Park'n Ride facilities at this junction. As Raymond Terrace is a fast growing centre and predicted to have large housing increases, this area needs to be retained for this

purpose. A station upgrade is needed with additional platform length and user friendly provisions, such as lifts.

The Countrylink service trains also move through this section of rail daily and they are not mentioned in the document.

4. Major transport intersection

Hexham is already a traffic choke point. There are huge numbers of buses, including school transport moving through this intersection as well as a growing number of cars commuting between the cities of Maitland and Newcastle daily. Also a large volume of B Doubles and other heavy vehicles move goods up and down this highway. It is the point of intersection between the New England and Pacific Highways as well as being on the alternate route to Newcastle Airport at Williamtown. The use of this section of road also includes tourist coaches running interstate and within NSW. To create the proposed transport hub here will add to the already large volume of traffic and ensure this area remains a traffic accident hotspot.

5. Western freight bypass

It has been proposed by Save Our Rail and other groups interested in transport, that a freight line which bypasses Newcastle to allow the carriage of through freight, not intended for the immediate Newcastle area, should be considered. It is proposed this could run between Thornton or Hexham and Wyong or Morisset. This appears to have not been considered in the document.

6. Flooding

Hexham is situated very close to the Hunter River which frequently floods, and has several other rivers feeding into it, including the Goulburn, Williams and Paterson Rivers. As well the Hexham Swamp is a huge water catchment area. This indicates that if there is any sea level rise due to climate change the entire area will be at risk of inundation. Has the impact of the increased rail construction been considered in this context as it could affect the flow of water in such an event?

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the community Save Our Rail asks that further in depth consideration be given before any decision is made to allow this project to go ahead as its impacts on the community of Hexham and the community of the Hunter Region need to be more fully examined.

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