

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism

Minister for the Hunter

Minister for Science and Medical Research

Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



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Survey results support plans for Newcastle city centre renewal

Hunter residents have indicated their support for the Hunter Development Corporation's City Centre Renewal Plan to redevelop inner-city Newcastle according to a Hunter Valley Research Foundation survey released today.

The independent survey sampled the views of 507 residents from the five local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens.

Minister for the Hunter Jodi McKay said the survey represents a strong indication of public support for the Hunter Development Corporation's 15 to 20 year vision for the future redevelopment of Newcastle.

The key findings of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation's study are:

- 93% of respondents recognise the need for the Newcastle city centre to be rejuvenated.
- More than 85% of respondents indicate moderate or higher support for the Education, Justice, Retail, Tourism and Commercial precinct catalyst projects outlined in the report.
- 59% of respondents indicate moderate or higher support for the removal of the heavy rail line to Newcastle and the development of a new transport interchange at Wickham
- 71% of respondents are supportive of a new Transport interchange at Wickham Station and the removal of the heavy rail line to Newcastle if it is dependant on the realisation of other catalyst projects.

Ms McKay said during the eight-week public feedback process on the City Centre Renewal report, more than 3000 people accessed the Hunter Development Corporation website and more than 350 written submissions were made to the Newcastle electorate office.

"The overwhelming sentiment behind the responses was that we need to act now on plans to redevelop Newcastle," Ms McKay said.

"It was also abundantly clear that Newcastle City Council, the community and our business leaders endorse the catalyst projects outlined in the City Centre Renewal Report."

Ms McKay said that inner-city Newcastle has a rare opportunity to be redefined and likened the current redevelopment plans to the community's recovery from a landmark event in Newcastle's history.

“This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Newcastle Earthquake, an event that had a devastating effect on the city and its residents,” Ms McKay said

“It was the way the community reinvented itself following the Earthquake that led to a new way of thinking regarding the Newcastle city centre.

“I am determined to see Newcastle realise its potential as the State’s second city and I will be working hard to ensure we can continue to build on the work of the Hunter Development Corporation and move to the next phase in this process.”

Ms McKay said the Government will appoint a consultant to work with the University of Newcastle and the Hunter Development Corporation to identify a suitable location for the land required for the first stage of the University’s relocation project.

“There is strong support within the community, businesses and Newcastle City Council for us to expedite plans to relocate the University of Newcastle to the city centre,” Ms McKay said.

“This view is supported by the City Centre Renewal Report which identifies the relocation has the potential to place up to 7000 students and 1000 staff into the heart of the city.

“It recommends that there would be significant benefits gained by the relocation and that it would probably be the most significant catalyst for the future redevelopment and renewal of Newcastle.

“The catalyst projects listed in the report have the combined potential to create up to 4,700 jobs during construction, more than 2,400 full and part-time jobs in the long-term and an estimated investment of \$1.4 billion into the Hunter Region.”

Ms McKay said she has instructed the Hunter Development Corporation to work closely with the University of Newcastle to identify suitable state-owned sites to locate the first stage of the University’s planned city campus.

“We hope to be able to identify a possible site that will help the University to move forward with this project and secure Commonwealth support for the relocation of facilities to the city centre,” Ms McKay said.

“In determining the future of the Newcastle rail line and the proposed transport interchange at Wickham it is imperative we secure the University’s presence in the CBD and understand where any future education precinct could be located.

“The NSW Government is also finalising the scope of future work around transport connections and will reporting back to the community in coming weeks.”

The complete Hunter Valley Research Foundation survey will be made available on their website www.hvrf.com.au from 10am this morning.