



# Jenny Aitchison MP

Tuesday 13 October 2015

## OVER A THOUSAND MAITLAND RESIDENTS SIGN PUBLIC TRANSPORT PETITION

Member for Maitland Jenny Aitchison has tabled a petition in Parliament calling on the Government to provide better public transport for Maitland commuters, including, returning the heavy rail line into Newcastle.

More than 1,000 people have signed the petition which called for the Baird Government to:

1. Re-introduce heavy rail into Newcastle Station
2. Provide, in the interim, the same stops for the existing bus shuttles (from Hamilton Station past Newcastle Station) as are proposed for the light rail
3. Make Victoria Street Station accessible for people with mobility issues
4. Introduce stations in the western growth areas of Maitland to service Bolwarra Heights, Oakhampton, Aberglasslyn and McKeachie's Run

"Despite a court ruling and intense public dissatisfaction, the Baird Liberal Government has continued to ignore the wishes of people in Maitland and the Upper Hunter by passing legislation to permanently remove the line in the Lower House. I expect that same legislation will be introduced into the Upper House this week," said Ms Aitchison.

"This legislation is not just an attack on Maitland and Upper Hunter commuters, it is also an attack on the democracy of our state. This truncation has been rejected by all Hunter communities since the 2011 election. Pro-truncation candidates in the Hunter have suffered massive swings against them, and in most cases lost their seats."

Ms Aitchison said "If Mike Baird's government continues with his plan to remove the rail in Newcastle, he is saying to all communities in NSW that 'no matter what you decide as a community, the government can make decisions from Sydney to destroy your transport infrastructure and you will be powerless to do anything to stop us.'"

"The Government has disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of people across the Hunter who voted to retain the rail. First on privatisation of our networks, and now this, it is hard to see where the Baird Government's bullying will stop."

"It's vital now that we keep up the pressure on the government and the cross bench to ensure Maitland area residents don't remain permanently disadvantaged."

"If the government won't see sense on the reintroduction of heavy rail I am calling on them to provide a guarantee and timeline for the introduction of light rail."

"This week in Parliament I will also be moving a motion to establish a Hunter Planning and Transport Authority to ensure an integrated transport, land use and development plan for the Hunter region to ensure the economic development and social inclusion of all in our communities."

“This motion will ensure future public transport needs and network expansions are handled by local experts and not from a desk in Sydney,” Ms Aitchison said.