



Review of Private Ferry fares from 1 January 2026

21 July 2025

IPART has been asked to determine maximum fares from 1 January 2026 for 7 private ferry operators that provide services under contract with Transport for NSW (TfNSW). We have also been asked to consider fares for the Palm Beach to Ettalong ferry route.

Private ferry routes covered by our review, current maximum fares set by IPART and current actual fares (\$)

Ferry Operator	Route	IPART's 2025 Maximum Fare	2025 Actual Fare
Brooklyn Ferry Service	Brooklyn to Dangar Island and Little Wobby	11.20	10.90
Captain Cook Cruises	Circular Quay to Lane Cove	11.90	7.70
Central Coast Ferries	Woy Woy to Empire Bay via Davistown and Saratoga	10.20	9.90
Church Point Ferry Service	Scotland Island and Western foreshore of Pittwater	12.00	12.00
Clarence River Ferries	Yamba to Iluka	11.60	11.60
Cronulla and National Park Ferry Service	Cronulla to Bundeena	9.10	9.10
Palm Beach Ferries	Palm Beach to Mackerel Beach and the Basin	9.70	9.70
Palm Beach Ferries	Palm Beach to Ettalong via Wagstaffe	14.70	14.70

Source: [IPART's determined maximum fares](#), Brooklyn Ferry Service, [Brooklyn Ferry Service](#), accessed 23 June 2025; Captain Cook Cruises, [Lane Cove River Ferry](#), accessed 23 June 2025; Cronulla and National Park Services, [Cronulla Ferries](#), accessed 23 June 2025; Fantasea Cruising, [Palm Beach Ferries](#), accessed 23 June 2025; [Church Point Ferry Service](#), accessed 23 June 2025; Central Coast Ferries, [Timetable & Fares](#), accessed 23 June 2025; Clarence River Ferries, [Timetable](#), accessed 23 June April 2025.

We are asking for your input to help us determine the maximum fares by either making a submission on this Call for Submissions paper or participating in our [survey](#). We are accepting submissions and survey responses until 18 August 2025. All feedback that we receive from stakeholders as part of our consultation will be considered as part of the review.

What has IPART been asked to do?

In assessing the 8 fares, the Tribunal will consider matters under [section 124 of the Passenger Transport Act](#). These include:

 <p>The costs of providing services</p>	 <p>The need for greater efficiency</p>	 <p>The protection of consumers from monopoly power</p>
 <p>The social impact</p>	 <p>The impact on usage of the greater public transport network</p>	 <p>The standards of quality, reliability and safety of the services</p>
 <p>The effect on the level of government funding</p>	 <p>Any matter specified in the referral</p>	 <p>Any other matter IPART considers relevant</p>

The [Referral Letter](#) from Transport for NSW asks us to consider:

- the level of competition for other transport modes and resulting implications for fares, other types of transport modes available to customers, as well as gaps or duplication with Sydney Ferries
- any performance indicators, such as service delays or cancellations
- customers' willingness and capacity to pay, where the routes operate
- fares for ferry services on the Palm Beach to Ettalong route
- any ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on demand and customer behaviour
- changes to fares and ticketing systems
- the implications of any potential Private Ferry Service becoming an Opal Ferry Service during the term of the determination.

What will we consider when setting maximum fares?

The efficient costs of providing private ferry services

As part of this review, we will set maximum fares based on the efficient costs of providing private ferry services. Fares based on efficient costs protect passengers and ensure enough revenue for ferry operators.

Efficient costs include:

- operating costs such as labour, fuel, insurance, repairs and maintenance, office rent, utilities, advertising, berthing and mooring fees
- capital costs such as replacing vessels and vessel refurbishment
- allowances for depreciation and a return on assets.

We will investigate changes to these costs, and we will also consider if there have been any changes to the operating environment which may have resulted in changes to costs since our last review. This will help ensure that the fares we set reflect the efficient costs of operating ferry services over time.

Variability in fuel prices

In previous reviews we have seen that fluctuations in the cost of diesel fuel can have a material impact on the efficient cost of running a private ferry service. Due to the volatility in fuel prices, our past fare decisions have included a fuel cost adjustment mechanism. The fuel cost adjustment mechanism helps protect operators from fuel price volatility by adjusting fares when diesel costs rise or fall substantially within a given year.

The fuel cost adjustment mechanism is applied to maximum fares when the annual change in diesel prices exceeds $\pm 10\%$. For instance, in 2023, we adjusted our maximum fare decisions by an average of 2.7% for each operator after diesel prices rose by 44% over the previous year.

As part of this review, we will evaluate the effectiveness of the current fuel cost adjustment mechanism. We are interested in hearing if stakeholders think that the fuel adjustment, and the 10% threshold, sufficiently addresses changes in fuel prices while protecting ferry passengers.

Scope for more sustainable ferries

In our last review, some operators identified that their next vessel purchase is likely to be an electric, no-emission vessel. In general, the initial outlay for electric vessels is typically more than conventional diesel vessels but with lower operating costs. In the event that electric ferries are adopted by an operator, we would need to assess the relevant costs of electric ferries and implications for any fuel adjustment mechanism. With electric vehicles and infrastructure becoming more accessible NSW-wide, we are seeking stakeholder views on the potential uptake of electric ferries across private ferry routes.

How many years to set fares

Some private ferry operators in NSW are small to medium size businesses with established patronage and a stable cost base. Our review will balance how we protect passengers and at the same time determine the efficient costs, with a fit for purpose regulatory framework.

We are considering changes to the length of time that maximum fares are set. We consider that setting fares for a longer period may reduce the regulatory demands on operators, while providing operators and passengers more certainty in pricing. However, this may lower the cost reflectivity of determined fares in later years, due to uncertainty of future costs and patronage. We want to hear from stakeholders if we should set fares for a longer period (e.g. operator contract lengths with TfNSW - from 5 to 15 years), a similar timeframe to the last determination (4 years) or a different timeframe.

Patronage levels and their composition

We are aware that ferry use has changed over the last 5 years. Revenue earned by private ferry operators is determined by both the overall passenger numbers and the types of fares (adult, concession, school student, and pension) charged. Our review will consider short- to medium-term patronage trends and forecasts.

The affordability of private ferry services and whether they represent value

In setting maximum ferry fares, we will consider passengers' willingness and capacity to pay for private ferry services. We will consider socio-economic indicators and other factors to assess ferry passengers' capacity to pay our proposed fares. We would like to hear from ferry passengers and other stakeholders on whether the current fares are reasonable, whether they represent value and how satisfied passengers are with their ferry service.

Competition to private ferry routes

We will assess the level of competition for private ferry routes. This includes the availability and accessibility of alternative public transport routes. We would like to hear from stakeholders how their private ferry journey compares to alternative modes of transport, and why they use private ferry services.

The need for viability payments

Where the revenue from fares does not recover the efficient costs of operating the private ferry service, the NSW Government may pay operators an annual viability payment. This is to ensure the operators can continue to provide essential transport services. Currently, three of the operators (Central Coast Ferries, Church Point Ferry Service and Cronulla and National Park Ferry Service) receive an annual viability payment.

Our fare decision will seek to appropriately balance funding from taxpayers and patronage revenue. In doing so, we will recommend the level of any viability payments to be paid by the NSW Government, although the NSW Government will make the final decision. Our recommendation on viability payments will consider any external benefits generated by the private ferry services (such as avoided congestion, avoided pollution and active transport benefits) and the role of the private ferry in the community it services, that is, to what extent the private ferry is an essential public transport service for a community which has few other transport options.

Integration into the Opal network





As part of this review, Transport for NSW has asked us to consider the implications of any potential Private Ferry Service that operates within the Opal network area^a becoming an Opal Ferry Service during the term of the determination. Becoming part of the Opal network may involve passengers using an Opal card and tapping on/off services, frequent use discounts and potentially paying for fares under the Opal fare structure (based on distance travelled).

We want to hear from you

We want to hear from private ferry operators, private ferry passengers, local communities, and any other interested stakeholders. The following is a list of questions that we consider important for our review. The questions are divided into those more relevant to operators and those more relevant to other stakeholders, however stakeholders are welcome to answer both sets of questions or only some of the questions if they wish.





While we have provided questions, we welcome input from stakeholders on any matter you consider relevant to this review.

Seeking comment from operators

-  1. How have the costs of providing private ferry services (such as wages, fuel, insurance, repairs and maintenance) changed over the last determination period and how do you expect them to change in the future?
-  2. Do you think that the fuel adjustment mechanism, and the $\pm 10\%$ threshold, adequately accounts for variability in fuel costs?
-  3. How likely are you to purchase an electric ferry in the next 5 years?
-  4. Would you like to see us determine fares for a longer period, a similar timeframe to the last determination (4 years) or a different timeframe?

^a The Opal network area covers Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast, the Hunter and the Illawarra. The Yamba to Iluka route is not within the Opal network area.

Seeking comment from passengers, community and other stakeholders

-  5. How would your usage of private ferries change in response to an increase or decrease in fares?
-  6. Do you consider the fare reflects good value for the service provided?
-  7. How does the private ferry service compare to your next best alternative transport option?
-  8. How would your usage of private ferries change in response to private ferry services within the Opal network area being integrated into the Opal network in NSW? This may involve tapping on/off, frequent use discounts and paying for fares under the opal fare structure (based on distance travelled).

Input from stakeholders is important to our review process, and we are interested in hearing about any matters you consider relevant to this review.

Seeking comment from all stakeholders

-  9. Are there any other matters you would like us to consider as part of this review?

We will be accepting submissions until 18 August 2025. You can make a submission on our [website](#).

Ferry passenger survey

We are asking passengers of regulated private ferry routes in NSW to fill in a short survey about their ferry use. We have included questions on:

- the affordability of fares and whether they represent value
- the performance and reliability of the services
- alternative transport options to private ferry services
- factors that influence private ferry usage.

The survey can be accessed via our [website](#).

Have your say

Your input is important to our review process.

You can get involved by making a submission or responding to our survey before 18 August 2025.

[Make a submission »](#)

[Respond to our survey »](#)

[Subscribe to the review »](#)

Next steps

We will consider all stakeholder feedback when preparing our Draft Report and Draft Determination. There will be further opportunities to provide input, including in response to the Draft Report and at a public hearing later this year.

Stakeholders who would like to be notified by IPART of updates to this review can subscribe on our [website](#).

We will provide our Final Report and Final Determination to the Minister for Transport for consideration in November 2025.

Review timeline

