

IPART Submission 2003 for Public Transport Fare review.

I am a regular user of City Rail and Sydney Busses services. As a user of the system, I feel the services provided are substandard and do not justify any further increases in fares until substantial improvements are made.

Below I've included some comments on why further fare increases do not seem justified.

Background

After living for 5 years in Melbourne travelling almost exclusively by Public Transport, returning to Sydney has highlighted what a poorly run public transport system currently operates in this city. In this environment it's hard to understand how raising fares can be justified.

Even though Melbourne's transport system is frequently criticised, over 5 years of Tram and Train usage I only suffered serious disruptions to services a couple of times. Since returning to Sydney 6 Months ago, and again trying to use public transport for most of my travel, there have been dozens of times where I've been left waiting for services, and had to use alternate means to get to my destination. Where as in Melbourne I would use public transport as an efficient and predictable way of travel compared to the car, in Sydney I find myself more and more turning to the car and taxis, because I can't rely on City Rail and Sydney Busses.

I currently travel between Bondi and St Leonards weekdays usually out of peak hours and often on weekends. This involves a walk, or a short trip on the 380 Bus, followed by a train to Town Hall, and a change for a train to St Leonards.

Performance Levels.

City rail states on-time running performance levels. Over the first 4 months of this year they average out at around 89.05% during peak hours (SRA IPART Submission 2003).

During my regular trip from Bondi to St Leonards I have to change once, so use 2 services in each direction.

Number Services used	% Chance at least one service will be delayed
1	11.0%
2 (one Trip)	20.7%
4 (One Day)	37.1%
20 (One Week)	90.2%

So for any one single trip to my destination there is a 20.7% chance I'm going to encounter delays. For each and every day of travel in 2003 so far there has been an astonishing 37.1% chance that one of the services I'm waiting for will be delayed. Experience travelling day in day out bears this out with the frequency of problems encountered on the system over the past 6 months.

One also assumes that the on-time figures presented by the SRA exclude cancelled services and the regular shutdowns of parts of the City Rail system for maintenance. For instance the complete shutdown of the North Shore line over the Christmas period, would equate to a reduction in on-time running figures by 19% - 6 Days/31 Days for that line that month (Since the bus travel inevitable takes longer than the scheduled train journey).

If any service provider provided this sort of service levels in a non-monopoly situation and they tried to raise the cost of that service you would have to figure they would be rapidly out of business.

I'd be very happy for City Rail to raise fares, if likewise they would refund fares, when service levels do not meet what was paid for.

City Comparison

The SRA submission compares fares to multiple cities. They make little mention of the different tickets available, the flexibility of the ticket purchased etc.

For example comparing a short metro trip and day ticket in Melbourne and Sydney.

City	Cost	Notes
Melbourne	2hr Ticket \$2.60	For at least 2 Hours of travel including return journey if within the 2 hours. Includes unlimited transfers between services and multi mode trips (Trains, Trams, and Busses) within Zone 1.
Sydney	Single Journey upto 5 Kms \$2.80 Peak Hour return \$5.60 Off-peak return \$3.40	No mode transfers.
Melbourne	All day ticket \$5.20	All day travel on Trains, Busses and Trams in Zone 1
Sydney	DayTripper \$13.40	All day travel on Trains Busses and ferries in purple zone.

The Melbourne fare may be around the same price for a single journey, but the ticket in Melbourne is far more flexible, allows for unlimited mode changes and can be used for upto 3 hours, extremely useful for short journeys such as shopping trips.

For all day travel in Zone 1 on all transport modes available the fee in Melbourne of \$5.20 the Sydney Day Rover in Sydney (purple zone) is almost 2½ times the price at \$13.40.

Clearly simple comparisons of single distance only based fares should not be used as justification for increasing fares as per the City Rail submission.

Fare Complexity

Granted that there are also a number of different fares available in Sydney, however they are SO complex that not even City Rail can understand them. As an example a common journey for me would be to travel return from the Bondi to St Leonards with a stop in the City.

On the City Rail Info web site, and on other documentation, it would seem the CityHopper would be the perfect ticket. The CityRail web site states for the Bondi to St Leonards Journey

http://www.cityrail.info/fares/fare_2.jsp?from=29&to=179

From **Bondi Junction** to **St Leonards**

	Adult	Child	Student*	Pensioner*	Half Fare*
Single	\$ 2.80	\$ 1.40	\$ 1.40	\$ 1.10	\$ 1.40
Return	\$ 5.60	\$ 2.80	\$ 2.80	\$ 1.10	\$ 2.80
Off Peak Return	\$ 3.40	\$ 2.30	N/A	N/A	N/A
RailPass (7 Days)	\$ 23.00	\$ 11.50	\$ 11.50	\$ 11.50	N/A
FlexiPass (30 Days)	\$ 90.00	\$ 45.00	\$ 45.00	\$ 45.00	N/A
FlexiPass (90 Days)	\$ 255.00	\$ 127.50	\$ 127.50	\$ 127.50	N/A
FlexiPass (180 Days)	\$ 481.00	\$ 240.50	\$ 240.50	\$ 240.50	N/A
FlexiPass (365 Days)	\$ 945.00	\$ 472.50	\$ 472.50	\$ 472.50	N/A

Rail Distance: 12.99km

CityHopper is also available for this journey:

Unlimited all day rail travel in the Central City area bounded by Kings Cross, North Sydney and Redfern. Adult Peak 7.60 Adult Off Peak 5.40
Child Peak 3.80 Child Off Peak 3.30

It clearly states CityHopper is available for this journey. However I challenge anyone to actually be able to purchase this ticket. After trying various times at the Bondi Station I rang the 131500 line. Both that line, and the contacts I had from CityRail were all very helpful. They stated the ticket was available and tried to address the issue.

However again after trying perhaps half a dozen times more times I have been completely unable to purchase that ticket at Bondi Junction or St Leonards station, with the common unhelpful response that that ticket is just not available.

How are travellers meant to understand all the ticketing options when CityRail themselves are unable to?

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