

Opal fares under review

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is calling for community input into how public transport fares should be set until 2024.

IPART is reviewing maximum fares across all rail, bus, ferry and light rail services on which the Opal card can be used in Sydney, Newcastle, the Central Coast, Wollongong, the Blue Mountains and the Hunter.

Public transport use benefits the whole community. But it also costs money to provide. It is increasingly important that fares provide the best possible value for money for both passengers and taxpayers while meeting the community's social, economic and environmental goals.

"Fares have fallen in real terms over the last ten years and currently pay for less than a quarter of the costs of providing public transport." IPART Chairman Dr Paul Paterson said

"Taxpayers are now paying more to operate public transport in NSW and with the significant investment in new services that is being made, this contribution is forecast to keep rising," Dr Paterson said.

We welcome input from everyone on how much of the costs should be paid through fares and how much should be funded by the rest of the community.

IPART is seeking comment on a range of fare options, including possible changes to:

- ▼ How fares are calculated for different distances, including the number and range of fare bands and maximum fares;
- ▼ Set new mode-specific fares for light rail and metro trips and/or adjusting the fare discounts for journeys that use more than one mode (eg, a bus trip and a train trip);
- ▼ Extend off-peak fares to buses, ferries, and light rail (these currently only applies to trains);
- ▼ Apply peak fares only to trips in particular locations (such as CBD train stations in periods where overcrowding is a major problem); and
- ▼ Deliver discounts for users of contactless payments using bank cards or mobile devices that do not currently attract the same discounts as the Opal card.

Dr Paterson said it is too early to say what the impact on fares will be.

Proposed fares will be released for public comment in November before the final determination on maximum fares is delivered to the NSW Government in February 2020.

The Issues Paper outlining the areas for feedback is available at <<http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au>>.