



Mr Nick Hague
Program Leader, Transport Pricing
Taxi, private bus and ferries reviews
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box Q290
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April 24, 2002

Dear Mr Hague

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the review of fares for taxis, private buses and private ferries in NSW.

The NSW Committee on Ageing is the official advisory body on ageing issues to the NSW Government through the Minister for Ageing, the Hon. Faye Lo Po', and thus has a considerable interest in public transport pricing policies for older people.

In late 2000, the Committee published a study on transport options of older people living in rural NSW, called Driving Miss Daisy in Country NSW. This explored a range of issues, including public transport. It examined the inequity of access to public transport concessions in rural areas, where private bus operators are the only providers of bus services, compared with concessions available to users of government operated buses.

The Committee is aware, of course, that these inequities also exist in large expanses of metropolitan areas such as western and south western Sydney.

This submission will concentrate on one issue only: the social impact of fare increases on older users of privately operated public transport., including taxis.

The Committee is aware that depending on their place of residence and the availability of government operated transport services, many older people are cushioned from public transport fare rises by the availability of set-price



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Pensioner Excursion Tickers (PET) by City Rail and State Transit Authority, and Pensioner Travel Vouchers by Countrylink.

It should be noted that these set-price concessions are not available to mature age unemployed people or others, only holders of an age-pension (or like) or a Seniors Card.

Older people value these concessions highly, and support their continued provision by the NSW Government. Indeed the NSW Committee on Ageing supports the continuation of set-price concessions, but is strongly urging the NSW Government to make them equitable to all users, not just the fortunate residents with access to CityRail, Countrylink and State Transit Authority services.

As mentioned above, these set-fare concessions are not available on private buses or taxis, so fare increases have a considerable impact on older people in areas covered by private bus operators.

Additionally, those older people who cannot use public transport on the basis of severe disability and must use taxis are even more disadvantaged. Proportional fare rises generally have a higher impact on taxi users.

On this point, the Committee wishes to take issue with your statement on page 36 that:

“Although they (users of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme) are required to pay a minimum of 50 per cent of the taxi fare, the scheme does limit the impact of any fare increase on this group.”

In fact, for fares over \$60 – not difficult for a Western Sydney or rural resident – the subsidised taxi user must pay a full fare for the amount over \$60. For example a subsidy user must pay \$30 for a \$60 fare, but \$50 for fare of \$80.

Who pays for higher fares is a matter of real concern for older people. Obviously there are three stakeholders – the user, the private operator or the NSW Government. All are impacted by the mix of subsidies and increased fares to varying degrees.

The NSW Committee on Ageing therefore recommends that the Tribunal recommend to the NSW Government the following:

- That the ceiling on Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme of a \$60 fare before the subsidy cuts out be increased by at least the same proportion as any fare rises.
- That the Tribunal call on the NSW Government to establish a set-price concession fare for private transport operators equivalent to the current or

reviewed set-price concession fares for CityRail, Countrylink and the State Transit Authority services.

For further information, please contact Margaret Tucker, Senior Policy Officer in the Committee's Secretariat on 8270 **2146**, or Sarah Fogg, Senior Project Officer on 8270 2155.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Linklater', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dawn Linklater
Chairperson