



8 November, 2017.

**Review of rural and regional bus fares**

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

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**Maximum fares for rural and regional bus services**

Dear Manager

The Border Rail Action Group (BRAG), formed in late 2014, is the pro-public transport voice for Albury Wodonga representing the community's interest in prosecuting ideas for improving passenger train services between Albury and Melbourne. BRAG members identified early in the journey the need for enhancing connectivity between modes of public transport and between populations.

BRAGs response to the IPART Report is one built on improving **connectivity**. Three of the Report's proposals resonate strongly with BRAG, namely:

1. Improvements in the ticketing system operating within Albury Wodonga to facilitate a single ticket for journeys across an operator's service area as well as across the border;
2. Improvements in connectivity between transport modes; and
3. Investigations into the provision of flexible, on demand services to complement fixed route bus services.

BRAG strongly endorses the call for improvements in bus services across Albury Wodonga. The basic structure and timetabling is at least 10 years old. During this period of time there has been considerable growth in the total population and changes in the demographics such as those arising from settlement of refugees.

Locally people are returning to rail notwithstanding VLine's systemic service problems between Albury and Melbourne. A joint report by four Councils found improvements in service could deliver 75% or more than 385,000 additional passenger rail trips per annum and another, 59% of existing and 72% of potential passengers would convert their non-train trips to rail travel. (Hume Corridor Passenger Rail Study, 2017).

Increasing train patronage across the two operators, VLine and NSW TrainLink, has yet to be translated by the two bus operators into opportunities for delivering services to the train stations.

Across Albury Wodonga the bus operators provide high frequency nodal services to shopping centres, e.g. Thurgoona, Lavington and Birallee, however less frequently to health and tertiary precincts.


We are appreciative of the Report acknowledging cross border issues with the delivery of bus services. Their raising is timely and most welcome. Whilst resolution is challenging, the cooperative spirit within the Albury and Wodonga City Councils and the good will that exists between the two bus operators are acknowledged as a solid basis for implementing the reform agenda. Further, the positive remarks coming from the bus operators on the IPART Report are also encouraging.

Maintaining the momentum generated by IPARTs Report calls for demonstrated leadership by the two Councils in bringing the parties together. One outcome sought is the conduct of well-publicised trials testing the Report's conceptual service models. Special funding will be required for the trials to run over a range of conditions. A trial advisory group with community representatives is seen as essential with results – progress and final – given wide publicity.

BRAG has been a consistent supporter of transport hubs that enable travellers to move easily between modes of public transport. We see development of a hub in Central Wodonga a necessity. The Albury Railway Station precinct and hub facilities are of a high standard with Wodonga City Council encouraged to emulate.

Our Group's Executive has a proven record of working cooperatively with all levels of government with us looking forward to acting constructively in implementing the aforementioned Report's recommendations.

Yours faithfully



Member BRAG Executive

Border Rail Action Group

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