

I want to make comment on your Point 10: *Are there any issues regarding fare discounts or concessions that we should consider?* (My comments also relate to your Point 7: *Are the current suite of discounts available on Opal services appropriate? Do you support IPART reviewing these discounts?*)

I'm horrified to read that in its last review IPART suggested that the current daily cap of \$2.50 for holders of the Opal Gold card does not support efficient use of the network and should be set at 40% of the concession Opal weekday cap (currently that concession cap is \$7.90). I understand IPART hasn't been asked to look at concession arrangements this time around but is seeking views on whether there are particular issues that stakeholders would like IPART to consider.

I thus am obliged to make comment, pointing out the positive benefits of the travel cap of \$2.50 per day for Seniors – and request that the current daily cap of \$2.50 for Seniors is not reviewed / removed.

- Seniors tend to travel out of peak periods, don't impact congestion and travel when capacity is ample – when public transport is in 'downtime' and may not otherwise be utilised.
- The daily cap surely increases public transport usage by seniors – and any increase in fares / removal of the cap could actually result in a reduction of revenue raised through senior patronage of the public transport system.
- The reduced fare through the Opal Gold Card cap makes public transport readily accessible for seniors and reduces congestion on our roads. (Road congestion currently being a major issue for the State Government).
- The concession encourages seniors to be able to participate in 'Active transport benefits' through the health benefit of walking to and from public transport stops and stations.
- The concession is also a small reward for many years of work, and an opportunity to get something tangible back from years of paying taxes and supporting the community – particularly if the concession is used when providing voluntary work, caring for relatives and friends etc.
(The Minister for Aging even says it's a way of saying thanks to seniors by easing the financial burden).
- The concession can aid social inclusion – and encourage seniors to make more trips than perhaps they might otherwise – to participate in various outings and meetings that provide mental and physical stimulation as well as social contact, so very important to our older population, in advancing years.
(And, of course, what doesn't get spent on transport in the first instance, does get spent elsewhere so, in the long run, the government is not losing out of its revenue).
- Many seniors are uncomfortable with driving long distances, even short distances in heavy traffic, or through unfamiliar areas – so the access to affordable public transport is imperative.
(And some seniors need to be positively encouraged to be no longer driving – due to reduced reaction times and failing sight etc – particularly when these issues associated with aging are not always self-diagnosed and recognised).

So the only consideration that IPART should give to Points 7 & 10 in its document is:

Don't recommend to remove the travel cap of \$2.50 per day for Seniors – as this discount is most appropriate for the reasons outlined above. And in any review of this discount, it is the positives as outlined above that should be stressed – and that any resulting consideration would thus support the continuation of this concession.