

Robert Mork



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Mr Paul Paterson  
Chairman IPART  
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Dear Sir,

I am a NSW senior and would like to comment on the Opal fares for seniors in NSW. This may be one of the subjects in your review but the NSW Government has not got the tenacity to update the Senior Opal card fares and conditions to get one, as they are afraid of a backlash which may affect their precious jobs. I can remember when the capped fare went from a \$1 to \$1.10 and the outrage by Seniors – if it had been sold properly and advised of the extra services they would get, it would not have been an issue.

Nevertheless, it's time for review. As you are well aware the \$2.50 fare cap for seniors hasn't changed in 15 years, yet costs for public transport have risen dramatically in that time frame.

Obtaining the seniors card and then the seniors Opal card is a joke – anyone over 60 can apply, providing they meet certain criteria – no real checks are in place. Lots of people are continuing to work full time after they turn 60, yet get the Opal card by not declaring they are working more than the appropriate hours. They simply don't care!

It's time we were in line with other States – the age should be raised to 65 and the daily fare increased. I go on holidays to other capital cities and use their seniors travel cards and comply with their conditions, eg in Melbourne you must be aged 65 (although the NSW seniors card is accepted) and the fare was until recently capped at \$3.60 per day but now raised to \$4.40 a day and not a whimper from the seniors. They realise Public transport is a cost and they have no trouble supporting it and paying their share. Not in NSW!

The entitlement age could be increased over a period of years and so could the fare be increased to what it similarly is in other States.

We need reliable and updated public transport and it comes at a cost. Surely seniors can afford a small increase to assist and feel good about it. It needs to be sold properly and with conviction.

Another alternative, if the current government hasn't got the guts to make changes, is to restrict the seniors opal card for use after 9.30am. They shouldn't be using public transport before this – unless they are off to full time work or maybe doing some volunteer work – people in other States manage and get on with it. My friends agree -it's been an inexpensive and good way to get around but we are all prepared to pay more.

#### Childrens Opal card.

We have grandkids and often take them out for the day using public transport and use Opal cards. It can be expensive as they only get 50 % off the regular fares. For example, we took them during the school holidays on a local bus to the train station, then the train to the city, then the ferry to Manly and then the bus back home. It was much more expensive than an Opal seniors card holder. The children loved the variety of public transport. Why can't the children's Opal card have a daily capped fare at a reasonable price?

We love the variety of public transport in Sydney and all other capital cities and we enjoy using it for a capped fare – but like all other things over time, costs go up and we must all be prepared to share some of cost increases if we are to continue to have great public transport.

Regards

