



21 January 2020

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop, NSW, 1240

Via: ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Re: Maximum Opal Fares 2020 -2024 Draft Report

The Western Sydney Business Chamber supports in principle the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) draft recommendations for *Maximum Opal Fares 2020 – 2024*.

The Western Sydney Business Chamber is a not-for-profit business organisation representing approximately 115 of Western Sydney's leading organisations. The Chamber has been a vocal advocate of the need for greater public transport infrastructure investment in Western Sydney and we recognise the need for a sustainable and affordable contribution from users to help maintain a safe and reliable public transport network in Sydney that reduces the impact of road congestion on the city's economy.

The Chamber supports the recommendations that IPART has put forward in the draft report.

Specifically we accept IPART's case for the need to increase OPAL fares by an average of five per cent per year over the next four years to support the goal of financial sustainability of Sydney's public transport network. We note that public transport fares have fallen significantly in real terms over the last ten years and the proposed increase would put single fares back in line with where they were a decade ago.

We also recognise that in the same period Sydney's public transport network has expanded significantly with new Sydney Train and Sydney Metro rail lines and light rail routes and expanded and renewed fleets of ferries, trains, buses and light rail vehicles. According to the latest Opal data from Transport for NSW, public transport patronage increased by five per cent over the year ending November 2019. The strong growth in patronage is placing additional pressure on the transport network with increasing occurrences of overcrowding on trains and buses and associated increases in the cost of maintenance as a result of running more frequent services.

The Chamber commends the NSW Government's \$50+ billion investment in public transport over the next 10 years. The additional operating costs of a larger public transport network

Western Sydney Business Chamber
Level 12, 100 George Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

PO Box 120 Macquarie Street
Parramatta NSW 2124

t +61 2 8838 0400
f +61 2 9633 5391
e enquiries@thechamber.com.au

ABN 63 000 014 504

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Helping Sydney maximise its potential as a leading global city.

Sydney Business Chamber is a division of NSW Business Chamber which represents 30,000 businesses across the state.

should be supported by a sustainable and affordable contribution from users through Opal which is in line with IPART's proposed fare increases over the next four years.

The Chamber supports expanding off-peak fares to bus and light rail services. Encouraging higher utilisation of public transport infrastructure outside of peak commuting times is a common sense approach to managing demand and reducing the financial cost of providing the infrastructure required to meet peak demand for only a few hours each weekday.

The Chamber also supports the recommendation to explore innovative Opal fare packages to provide discount incentives to a range of different commuters and travel patterns. We note that current Opal discount incentives are directed at the traditional daily (half-fare after 8 trips) or long distance (\$50 weekly cap) commuters while commuters traveling three to four days a week are missing out. The Chamber believes that incentivising casual and part-time workers that travel between three to four days a week on public transport would support the goals of encouraging modal shift and travel outside of peak periods.

Mobility access continues to be a financial and physical challenge for many vulnerable people in our communities. We support the recommendation to provide discounted fares for people who are healthcare card holders to reduce the barriers to public transport access.

The Chamber supports the principle of integrating fares between transport modes. Reducing or eliminating the financial penalty for mode changes to encourage the most efficient mode and route choice should be prioritised over the desire to signal the cost of providing each type of mode service.

The Western Sydney Business Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the draft recommendations. We endorse the principles of a sustainable and affordable public transport network for Sydney and believe that implementing the recommendations put forward by IPART supports this goal.

Kind regards



David Borger OAM
Executive Director