

Dear Sir

In your 2006 report on fare determinations for Newcastle Buses IPART considered that Newcastle Buses should improve its cost recovery by improving patronage levels benefiting from expected population growth and easing its dependence on fare increases.

The 2008 network service review was expected to grow patronage by 1% pa in line with population growth. This would have seen an additional 583K passengers by 2012/13. However the network structure and paucity of service provision (most routes only have an hourly headway service) do not meet the needs of the community and as a result Newcastle Buses now carries 720K passengers less over the past five years than was proposed.

Clearly Newcastle Buses have not responded to IPART's recommendation to grow patronage and therefore is still overly reliant on fare increases. Until that possibility is withdrawn there is no incentive for Newcastle Buses to undertake the long overdue need to re-organise the route network and to provide a level of service required for an effective bus system serving the Newcastle urban area.

I recommend no fare increase and a directive to provide a plan to efficiently grow bus patronage before any further application for a fare increase would be considered.

Yours faithfully

Dr Graham Boyd
President
Hunter Transport Improvement Association