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Submission: Attached is an email that I have sent to a variety of NSW politicians concerning the IPARD recommendations related to the Gold Opal Card.

The essence of my submission to IPART is contained within that email, and I have nothing further to add.

**Adrian**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 January 2016 11:26 am  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
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**Subject:** IPART Recommendations - Opal Card for Seniors

Dear Ms Berejiklian and Mr Constance

*(Note to The Hon. Peter Phelps MLC, Government Whip: Would you forward a copy of this email to Mr Niall Blair, Mr Mike Gallacher, Mr Duncan Gay, Mr Matthew Mason-Cox and Mr Gregory Pearce please? For some reason not known to me, those members of the Legislative Council do not publish their email addresses. All are members of the Coalition parties, so I seek your help in bringing this matter to their attention.)*

As you are the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer respectively, I am sending you this email to express my dismay at the IPART findings and recommendations in relation to the Fare review which indicated significant changes for those using the Seniors Gold Opal Card.

I am also sending this to my local MP, the member for Blue Mountains, Ms Trish Doyle, as well as every member of the Legislative Council. They are my elected representatives and I want them to also know how I feel.

In the forward to the 2016 Seniors Directory, Premier Baird made the following statement:

*“Seniors make an exceptional contribution to our community, playing a vital role in our families and often as the backbone of our voluntary organisations and local neighbourhoods, and we want to assist you to continue to play your important role within the community. That is why the Government has committed additional funds to Seniors Card over the next four years to expand the program and deliver even greater benefits and opportunities to seniors.*

*The Government understands the importance of embracing our seniors and celebrating their achievements. We want to ensure NSW remains a safe place where seniors feel valued and respected. To do so, the NSW Government regularly consults the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing for feedback on our policies and ideas.”*

If the recommendation to restrict the reach of the Gold Opal Card is implemented, I believe that it would be only too evident that this view no longer exists - if it ever really did - and would reveal your government's pursuit of cost saving at the expense of valuing Seniors as clear evidence that the Premier's remarks were, or had become, hypocritical cant.

Seniors in possession of a pensioner Concession Card are already doing it very tough and should not be subjected to any increase in relation to travel costs, particularly as much of their travel is of necessity rather than choice.

In addition, what clearly beggars belief is the suggestion that those Seniors not in possession of a Pensioner Concession Card would be required to face a daily fare increase of 260%. This recommendation clearly ignores the fact that, in many cases, self-funded retirees do not qualify for a Pensioner Concession Card merely because they do not meet the ever-tightening income and assets tests (particularly in relation to "singles") which are determined annually by the Commonwealth.

An argument has been advanced that "wealthy people" should not have their public transport subsidised by the taxpayer. In response to that, I ask: do millionaires catch trains and buses? And are we to deny all seniors the benefit of the cheaper public transport that recognises their significant contribution to both society and the economy over long years in order to save a few paltry dollars from a very small portion of the population who are, in any case, unlikely to use the concession to any significant degree anyway?

As a self-funded retiree (who does not qualify for a Pensioner Concession Card) and who is partly disabled, I find the IPART recommendations offensive. I am no millionaire. I am already facing an increase in income tax because of the Commonwealth's decision to remove the medical expenses tax rebate as well as increased medical costs as a result of changes to pathology funding and increases in the costs of medications together with an ever widening gap between medical costs and refunds. I can ill-afford any increase in travel costs as well.

If the recommendation is accepted, it will mean I have to reduce my public transport travel significantly even though my current travel is done mainly in off-peak periods.

To put it bluntly, Ministers, I am angry that this proposal has even been suggested and urge you to reject the IPART's recommendation.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Connelly

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

cc: Ms Trish Doyle, Member for Blue Mountains  
All Members of the NSW Legislative Council