

## IPART SUBMISSION INTO PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES

2 Opal provides an integrated ticket but still charges different fares for different modes of transport. Do you see value in also making fares more integrated?

3 There are many different options for increasing fare integration. They range from further integration for multi-leg journeys, which retains mode-specific fares but puts measures in place to remove penalties for switching modes, to full integration where fares do not differ by mode of transport, or by the number of trips made in each journey. Which of these options do you support and why?

4 If you support full fare integration, would you continue to support it if it meant that fares for some journeys, in particular, single mode journeys made in the peak had to rise? Why or why not?

I would like to see more fare integration with the Opal card system. The main reason promoted for the introduction of the Opal was integration across various modes of transport ie that you could use the same card on a bus, train, ferry or light rail. However this is not much help when there is no fare integration.

Certainly the integrated ticket argument was the reason given to me when I could no longer buy the MyMulti 1 yearly paper ticket which cost \$1672 including \$152 GST – which I could use across all modes of transport – and be essentially charged a flat weekly fee (roughly \$32 through weekly pay deductions). Now I am still being charged when I transfer to different modes ie rail to bus, but this is only counted as one journey under the Opal rules.

The unintended consequence is I now have to change my budget on a weekly scale to accommodate the Opal card, which I was told was the exact opposite would happen when the MyMulti yearly ticket was withdrawn from sale!

I also am ending up having to pay more in the long run to reach the Weekly Travel Reward (8 journeys) which was heavily promoted as another reason to switch to Opal. I would call this double dipping and counter-productive to what various Ministers for Transport have promoted as the reason for the Opal in the first place and I notice these same reasons are being trotted out for why paper tickets are being phased out in the New Year.

I would like fare integration to be considered by this Review, particularly removing penalties for switching modes. I switch from buses to trains quite regularly, particularly coming from areas not serviced by trains such as Drummoyne and Randwick. It is frustrating and expensive to be charged for both legs of travel, yet it is only considered a single journey under the Opal system.

Opal administrators have recommended I use the Travel10 paper ticket when I am transferring from the train to bus, but this won't be an option next year when Travel 10 and other paper tickets are no longer being sold from 1 January 2016. Minister Constance said there was no point running two ticket systems – I would argue a pre-existing green machine on either a bus or ferry is hardly running a different ticket system, and essentially the

Department of Transport is already running a two ticket system given the lack of fare integration across modes of travel.

Re Q4

I am unclear why workers who have to travel in peak hour due to inflexible working arrangements/starting times need to be continually slugged ie (going on the modelling supplied in the IPART issues paper) if full fare integration is brought in, fares for single mode journeys in peak will have to rise. This means paying more than I am now for getting trains and buses in single mode journeys – how is full fare integration a benefit to the customer then??, particularly when no one seems to agree how far Tempe, in my case, actually is to the city (mentioned further below and which is the subject of a separate submission by Mark Ludbrooke and other concerned citizens)

Most people would agree full fare integration should be part of the Opal card system (in the first place), but if it drives costs up even further – well please don't continue to say 90 per cent of Opal card users are better off than using paper tickets. They are clearly not – particularly compared to the MyMulti 1 yearly ticket.

#### How should fares vary by distance travelled?

There is a wide discrepancy with fares charged from Tempe with Opal and Transport officials unable to say why an extra distance is lobbed on to Tempe customers (3.21km) when it is not supported by the actual distance to City stations. This is the subject of another submission by Mr Ludbrooke and I would like to add my support to this.

There is also no justification why a fully integrated system starts at 8-18km, and not 10km unless it is designed to grab more customers.

I certainly don't mind subsidising public transport users who have to travel long distances from the Blue Mountains or the Illawarra, or those facing a longer commute from Parramatta, western Sydney and other areas. But please don't make it a double or triple whammy of hitting peak hour commuters with higher prices when they have no control over when they can travel and tinkering with the Weekly Reward system on top of everything. That is neither a fair nor integrated way of sharing the pain on top of major CBD bus disruption starting from October this year.

#### How should fares vary by the time of travel?

Bus trips should be discounted during off peak travel, you are charged the same in peak hour as you are on a Saturday night.

#### What discounts should apply for frequent travel?

There should be no change to the Weekly Travel Reward of 8 journeys, this should not be increased to 9 (as in Queensland) or be prescriptive on when the free journeys should be taken ie not allowed to be taken during peak hour. Forcing people on to the Opal system by telling people they will be better off then changing the discount structure and removing alternative paper tickets (such as the Weekly and Travel 10) I believe is false advertising and misleading. Most people will not be better off if the 8 journey discount is changed in any way,

most people travel free on Fridays and most of my friends rarely travel on the weekend anyway – they drive because of very poor public transport timetable options.

I do not think an independent body such as IPART should be manipulated in to reviewing this part of the Opal structure. The decision for the IPART review of fares was couched in the terms of the predicted George Street mayhem as part of the light rail project when thousands of bus users will be forced to change journeys and use rail services. At no stage was it publicised by the Minister of Transport that IPART was also reviewing the Weekly Travel Award – I think there is a lack of transparency here and the majority of Opal users would not be aware the Reward is under review. I only became aware when the Illawarra Mercury, due to its high number of commuters, published a story on this issue. Many of my colleagues who live in The Shire were not aware and were concerned given they factor in the Reward as part of their weekly travel budget.

12 Do you receive any benefit from the current weekly and daily caps?

13 Does the weekly travel reward (free trips after you pay for the first eight journeys) encourage you to use more public transport than you would otherwise? Are you more likely to make shorter bus or light rail journeys early in the week in order to access the discount sooner?

14 Would you support discounted fares on more services (eg, a \$2.50 daily cap for rail, bus and light rail travel on Saturdays and Sundays) if that meant that you were unable to use free trips during peak times?

Do receive any benefit from the weekly travel reward? How fair do you think the current discounts are?

I am strongly opposed to making any change to the current Weekly Travel Reward and most people living in Sydney, Central Coast and Illawarra would also. We have repeatedly been told most commuters are better off under Opal – and I believe this has taken into account the free trips during peak times. I am spending at least \$40-45 a week on public transport travel before I qualify for my Reward, this is worse off than under the previous My Multi1 Yearly card (\$32). I will be spending much more if the Reward is changed in any way.

To change the current Travel Reward of 8 journeys to not include travel during regular peak hour times I believe is discriminatory when most regular users can not tell their employers when they would like to start work or leave most days – and this includes NSW Government which employs thousands of public servants.

The Issues Paper released by IPART appears unduly focused on media reports by Sydney Morning Herald transport writer Jacob Saulwick on how a minority of people are using the Opal card for shorter trips such as the Pyrmont light rail/Star Casino or other ways designed to maximise the Weekly Reward earlier in the travel week. I think the figures bear out that most Opal card users are not changing their travel behaviour going on the number of free trips alone on Friday – which I still believe is a low proportion (only 60 per cent) given the hundreds of thousands of trips taken per week. If the vast majority of people are running between light rail stations like the Herald would have you believe/changing their travel behavior earlier in the week, surely this would be reflected in the number of Wednesday and

Thursday figures of free trips being taken. It is not, and this should not be used as any justification for a change in the Weekly Travel Reward.

I might also add the one-hour between trips transfer does not seem to be under review by IPART. This is not explained properly as the hour starts after the first tap off on your journey, not the start. Hence if your journey starts at noon, you tap off at 12.20pm and return after your appointment at 1.15pm, it is still considered a transfer, not a separate journey. So you may return 2 hours later, but it is considered a one-hour transfer. This is another way of trying to manipulate customer's behavior with artificial benefit as this transfer period explanation is neither clear, concise nor accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission.