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27 January 2016



Review of Public Transport Fares
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box K35
HAYMARKET POST OFFICE NSW 1240

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES
DRAFT IPART REPORT DATED DECEMBER 2015**

I wish to make a submission in respect of one component of the abovementioned IPART report that is currently on public exhibition.

I have read the Draft Opal Fares Report from IPART.

My concern relates solely to one aspect of the report, that being the proposed modification of the Gold Opal card, so as to exclude seniors, who are not Pension Concession card holders, from the ability to use the Gold Opal card.

My position is that I am a retiree who is living through careful utilization of my modest self-funded superannuation pension. I utilize the Gold Opal card for travel wherever possible, and I prefer this form of travel to usage of my motor vehicle. Like the draft report notes, I as well as many persons in my position, avoid travelling in peak hours, and as such do not contribute to any peak hour crowding. Travelling from the Central Coast to Sydney for medical appointments and the like, requires a relatively early departure from the Central Coast, but arrival in Sydney is always outside of peak crowding times.

I must dispute the comment on page 30 of the draft report wherein it is stated that the current system allows customers on relatively high incomes to access concessions. Contact with my local community has failed to identify any such situation, and whilst there is always the exception, it is grossly unfair to penalize the vast majority because of the perceived financial resources of a very small few.

My personal situation of living from my own savings and superannuation, is not unusual in my community, and in doing so considerable savings are made for the public purse.

The Gold Opal card provides me, where possible, with a safer mode of transport, and although I acknowledge it is subsidized by the state government, I feel it encourages senior persons to achieve social interaction within their community whilst achieving safe travel, and demonstrates practical application of the social policy objectives of government.

The proposed denial of access to the Opal Gold card by persons not holding Pension Concession cards, is manifestly unfair, and places unreasonable financial impost for public transport travel upon those most likely to comprise the socially disadvantaged members of our community. Further, as previously stated, I dispute comments in the IPART report that leads to the conclusion that senior card holders are often quite able to pay a lot more for transport, for my personal observations and experiences is to the contrary.

The draft report notes that usually concession pricing is a matter for Government as part of its social policy objectives, although in this instance specific comment has been sought from IPART in this area. The proposed removal of Senior Card holders from access to the Gold Opal card, is a poor demonstration of social responsiveness, and the current review of Opal fares provides a good opportunity for the Tribunal, to demonstrate that it is too has a social conscience, and accordingly, in the final report delete the concept of removing Senior Card holders from access to the Opal Gold card.

Without a doubt an increase to a daily cap of \$9.00 for senior persons is grossly unfair, and will act as a deterrent for seniors to use public transport, when such form of transport is probably their safest option.

In respect of other aspects of the draft report I accept a modest increase on the current \$2.50 fare is reasonable, particularly as it is a decade since the last review.

I offer no comment on other aspects of the report as I am not sufficiently familiar with the nominated circumstances.

I trust the Panel will give due weight to my comments in preparation of the final report.

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