

Opal Submission
Mr Peter Boxall
Chair
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
Review of Public Transport Fares
PO Box K35
HAYMARKET POST SHOP NSW 1240

Dear Mr Boxall and Committee,

I would like to make the following points of reference with regard to your review into Public Transport Fares.

- I believe any increase should be in line with current CPI increase, which was registered at 1.7%.
- The language used in the submission reads as if those who use the system as it is allowed to be used are somehow committing a crime. The NSW transport Minister has said that she welcome's commuters taking advantage of the system as it was introduced. I understand there maybe 'perverse' use of public transport however this is not everyone who uses it.
- The government implemented the current system to help the bottom line for citizens, especially families, and increase public transport use; I believe the proposed changes will impact on both. The system as it stands is of unquestionable assistance. In my own case, my travel costs will increase from \$90 a fortnight to \$130 (roughly 40%) given that I travel as I am currently allowed over 60km a day (Central Coast to Sydney). As I do not have a car and rely on public transport every day, it will actually be up to \$150 a fortnight because of the proposed new weekend cap. My husband has not been able to find employment for over 5 years (and at 60 years of age may not work again) and does not receive any government assistance because I work full time. The figures I mention do not take into account any travel he does which is minimal because we cannot afford to spend a lot extra on his travel and so he is limited in where he can go and what we can do together especially as recreational. While we are able to meet our commitments of rent, a small amount of personal debt (comparatively speaking), food and travel, it doesn't leave much left over. There are more households in my situation than gets recorded and I can only imagine what it is like for families with children.
- I am sure I am not the only passenger who is fully dependant on public transport and I would envision that your prediction on page 7 of 40% of passengers being better off, may not take into account those who use the card on the weekend. My recommendation would be to make the cap just weekly, Monday to Sunday (even if a little higher again), to decrease the impact incurred to regular, dependant users of public transport - socially and economically.
- Further to my above recommendation; if there must be a weekend cap, make it \$5, maybe even for each day, thereby making the impact of the increase less substantial. It would also help to maintain some incentive to use public transport. Psychologically it is a big difference as well as financial.
- In regard to your comments on page 25: while it is important to have enough on a card to cover the trips taken, having to find extra to cover costs for the first week under your proposal, may cause hardship especially for those who travel greater distances and pay more. The impact would be greater if there is system fault. I personally put on enough for two weeks based on what I use now however, this may not be viable for others. To offset this to a certain degree, commuters should be allowed to use \$5 increments where appropriate such as: \$65 instead of \$70 (which is what would happen if the new cap is accepted). Even those few extra dollars each time you top up make a difference. While I know this is out of your direct pervue, the organisation responsible for administering the Opal cards should be informed of this impact. \$5 is legal tender and I am not sure how it is allowed that they can determine what is received. If a person only needs to make one or even two \$2.10 (one section) trips on an adult Opal card, they need \$10 not \$5.00. If that is all they have they cannot top up or need to pay extra to buy a paper ticket. Further to this point, if someone does not have a credit/debit card, they are unable to top up at a machine or must pay more for single or paper ticket. If possible, the machine should be re-configured to allow for full cash top up. I believe this would work towards decreasing some of the problems around revenue.
- For Gold Opal card holders, again while I understand the rational, I recommend that the cap be placed at \$3, again physiologically very important. As we all know, seniors are very reliant on public transport. Having worked and contributed to the development of this state and country. I believe the least we can do is allow them to travel for minimum cost.
- Change the rates for those not on a pension but again the concession could be \$6.00 or \$7.00
- If the aim is to find the balance between running costs and fairness, the more accessible and cost effective public costs are, the more potential; for; people to use it which in turn will increase revenue, to minimise environmental impact, stimulate and increase economic growth and increase in jobs.
- While the offer to save more in off peak is nice, it is not always practical for most working commuters.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my submission.

██████████