

Submission to "More efficient, more integrated Opal fares" Draft Report,
December 2015

February 2016

On recommendation 9, I find the year-on-year 12-monthly increases in the weekly cap, from \$65 to \$70 then to \$75 over the two year period from 1 July 2016 to 1 July 2018 to be unreasonable and not in-line with typical cost-of-living increases or CPI. What is the basis for the increase percentages here, which are a high >7% year-on-year increase?

I object to some of the assertions and reasoning laid-out in section 2.7. This section takes-aim at the current Sunday cap, suggesting that it has driven-up the cost of delivering ferry services. What is the basis for this assertion? What is the incremental cost per additional passenger of delivering the ferry service? Have additional services been required to meet the Sunday demand? This section seems to attack the exact purpose of the family-friendly Sunday-cap, and in claiming to deal with a dubious claim on the cost of running the ferries, then seeks to equally penalized other forms of family-friendly weekend travel options, including rail and light-rail.

Also in section 2.7, the claim is made that families are deferring Saturday travel to Sunday in order to make use of the Sunday cap. Of course this is likely to be true. However the remedies offered are:

- "we consider that demand could be spread more evenly over the weekend by setting the Saturday daily cap at the same level as the Sunday cap"
- "Sunday caps for Concession Opal and Child/Youth Opal fares should be set lower than the Adult Opal cap to continue to provide an additional discount for family groups."
- "We have developed a set of daily caps for Adult, Concession and Child/Youth Opal cards on Saturdays and Sundays that we consider is likely to increase use of under-utilised weekend services, without creating pressure to invest in costly new services."

On initial reading, this sounds like the same pricing structures will be applied to Saturday as to current Sunday pricing, however review of the table shows something remarkably different to that. Saturday and Sunday prices are now equalized, but the total cost burden to families has increased, by increasing the Sunday caps to what might be typical of reasonable uncapped travel on the Saturday, which significantly dilutes the weekend discounting, and discourages family use of public transport. Instead of halving the child/concession weekend cap fare, you've doubled the adult cap! That's the worst way to achieve "Child/Youth Opal fares should be set lower than the Adult Opal cap to continue to provide an additional discount for family

groups." imaginable.

The public transport network needs to be encouraged to have higher, not lower utilization on non-peak periods including weekends. Weekend road traffic is an ever-increasing problem in Sydney, and public transport for families to things such as sporting commitments is critical in addressing this. By increasing Sunday caps and furthermore failing to further encourage family-friendly cost structures for weekend travel, you are encouraging more vehicles onto the road, under-utilizing off-peak transport capacity, and shifting the cost-burden for transport onto families.

I recommend retaining the same cap-levels currently available on Sundays, and introducing a similar, or perhaps 50% higher-cap for Saturdays if you want to address weekend Sunday-skewed travel patterns.

Regards
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