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Submission: Submission regarding Gold Opal Pricing

I agree that there is a case for raising the price (or cap) of the Gold Opal Card, which has been at \$2.50 since 2005.

A level of \$3.50 would seem to compensate for the 30% inflation since introduction of the PET. Index linking the price also makes sense.

I disagree with some conclusions in the IPART report, relating to use of Gold Opal card.

a. In section 2.8.2, it states that that only about 4% of peak time travellers are using a PET and that this is “insignificant”. I disagree: 4% in a crowded bus could mean that 2 - 4 other people will not be able to board almost every bus. This is certainly the case along the lower reaches of the bus routes to the Northern Beaches, where I have had 10 years of personal experience.

b. In Section 2.8.3 there is a recommendation that Seniors Card holders be eligible for Concession Opal cards, “so they would face stronger peak/off peak price signals,”. I believe this is misleading because the peak pricing signal applies only to the rail network.

c. I believe also that any increase in the cost of the use of public transport could be a disincentive to use public transport- the report suggests otherwise. This applies, particularly people with fixed incomes.

Further, along with index linking of the cap, is the fact that retirement ages are increasing, and that this is supported by government policies. This suggests a case for raising the eligibility age for the Gold Opal card (or age/retirement related Concession card). I think a more logical age might be 65 for cards or concessions related purely to age or retirement status.

Given these considerations, I recommend the following:

1. Raise the Gold Card cap to \$3.50, index linked
2. Make the \$3.50 cap applicable only to off-peak travel
3. Raise the qualifying age for Gold Card to 65
4. Leave all seniors (of 65 and over) eligible for the Gold Card
5. Set qualifying ages for state pensioners and war widow/ers as appropriate

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