

Author name: D. Bushell

Date of submission: Friday, 5 February 2016

Submission: I am a welfare worker in western Sydney. I am appalled that the state government would consider making the gold opal card 40% of general fare unless it means people pay less than \$2.50. Once again the poor are targeted. I have clients that have to access methadone clinics or pharmacies EVERY DAY by public transport. Currently this is \$35 out of their pension or Newstart every fortnight. This is not affordable. Public transport is not affordable at all on Newstart if the person has not been given the pension card. Does anyone in government have any idea about Newstart? Have any of you ever tried to live on it? I can guarantee, no matter how good you are at budgeting, you could not. Public transport should be FREE for those on Newstart or Pension. The fines for travelling without a ticket my clients incur are obscene and immoral. They are weighed down by debt, they cannot get their drivers licence and therefore have trouble getting a job and so the cycle continues. Our society continues to victimize and burden the poor. Mr Baird's stunt with Scotty selling the Big Issue does not cover his sins against the poor of this state. What we need is a generous public transport system that encourages the poor to move about our cities, seek help, look for work and integrate into society. Not a system that builds fear and penalizes the poor for being poor.

Also the ability to access these cards needs to be made easier. People need to be able to rock up to a newsagent/rail station etc, produce their concession card and get an Opal card. Having to phone or go on line, even have a postal address, is far too bureaucratic and difficult (and costly) for people who are already struggling with life. Again, the government has no idea how hard it is for a large proportion of its citizens to navigate daily life. Make it easier – stop burdening the poor. The Opal card is just a way to monitor citizens if the ridiculous acquisition conditions are not changed.

Sincerely