

Proposed Increase in Maximum Daily Fares for Self-funded Retirees

I can understand that there is a need to ensure that public transport is sustainable. Therefore I can understand the need to increase the various fees for the use of public transport.

However, I find that it is difficult to justify the proposed change to move self-funded retirees from using the Gold Opal Card to a less generous concessional rate. This change will mean that self-funded retirees will move in 2016 from paying the current maximum of \$2.50 per day to paying a maximum of \$9.00 a day, an increase of 260%, or increasing the maximum fare cost almost four times.

I know that self-funded retirees are many times well off and can afford such change. \$2.50 was a very low amount to have to pay, especially as the eligibility of the NSW Seniors Card is being 60 years of age or over and working less than 20 hours per week. However, for those 65 years of age and over, I also know that many are not really all that much better off than many of the Pensioner Concession Card holders and NSW War Widow/er Card holders. It is often a matter of how one manipulates one's finances.

If the average single journey for bus travel is \$2.30 and the average for rail travel is \$3.07, then for people like me and others that I know that do not live in walking distance of a railway station, the average price that we will be paying for every time we want to go somewhere by train will be \$9.00.

As well, as we get older the other only real alternative to public transport for getting out will be the car. I think that this will force many of us to use the car even as is generally being acknowledged that as we age we are slowly becoming less skilled in driving because of increased reaction times, less flexibility (e.g. to turn our heads), etc.

So I ask that you reconsider the need to stop self-funded retirees accessing the Gold Opal Card. If the NSW Seniors Card criteria for access to the Gold Opal Card is unfair then consider some other criteria for citizens as they age.

If that is not possible, I ask that the change in price be only gradually introduced as I know that the shock of the very large percentage increase in prices will definitely change the behavioural patterns of us older citizens. We will just not use public transport if we have to pay almost four times as much as we do now.

As well, I ask that strong consideration be given to allow those who are gradually becoming less able to drive because of their age, such as those 65 years of age or older, to access the Gold Opal Card concessional public transport rates. I strongly believe that public safety would be greatly served.

Gregory Harrigan