

FINDING THE BEST FARE STRUCTURE FOR OPAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES IN SYDNEY & SURROUNDS

Individual Submission: I Waples

I am a member of a large group of senior citizens, whose ages range between 60 and 90. As such, we are heavily dependent upon public transport for our medical, social and shopping travels. Many of our group qualify as recipients of a Centrelink pension of some kind, but a significant number are self-funded retirees, holders of the Seniors Card, or holders of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Concession card. As such, the proposals affecting the pricing of journeys under the Gold Opal Card are of grave concern to us.

Gold Opal Cards & Concession Opal Cards

My main concern relates to the higher cap being recommended for non-pensioner holders of the Gold Opal Card. The income of people who are self-funded retirees is currently comparable to that of pensioners and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Many of these people will be unable to absorb the higher costs of public transport and will be forced to restrict their journeys to the absolute essentials. Any government policy that has the effect of confining elderly people to their homes is not in the best interests of the community or the people themselves.

- In the interests of equity, all non-pensioner holders of the Gold Opal card should be assigned the same reduced daily cap as the pensioner holders.

Peak-Hour Travel Penalties

I am also concerned with the proposal to penalise Gold Opal Card holders for travelling in transport peak hours. It is a fallacy to suggest that elderly people have unlimited options in selecting their times of travel – especially for medical appointments. The timing of such appointments is often beyond the control of the patient and will frequently involve the patient in peak-hour travel, either to get to the appointment or to return home afterwards. Even for non-medical journeys, people may not have much choice – if a journey requires several modes of transport (e.g. bus then train/ferry), even a mid-morning appointment in the city may require the first portion of the journey to be taken in peak travel times, especially for those living in the outer urban areas.

- This proposal should be rejected.