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4 February 2016

I refer to the More Efficient, More Integrated Opal Fares Draft Report dated December 2015 and submit the following comments regarding the draft decisions and recommendations.

Customers will no longer receive free travel after making eight trips between Monday and Sunday

In the past when customers purchased a Weekly Ticket, this equated to paying for four return trips in that week, therefore the fifth day was free travel. The introduction of the Opal Card again allowed free travel on the fifth day of the working week. To charge customers for the travel after the eighth trip is only a mechanism for this Government to increase revenue and does not encourage greater use of public transport.

The suggestion that consumers could save money by switching their travel to some off-peak times is not feasible for the majority of working citizens. We have set hours that we need to commence and finish work, so changing those times is not a possibility.

Saturday/Sunday cap

The Fun Day Sunday tickets were a cost effective means for families to use public transport, therefore reducing the number of cars on the roads. To increase these tickets will result in greater use of private transport as the gap between public transport and the cost of petrol will be reduced, therefore for convenience families will revert back to using their cars.

Gold Opal/Concession Opal

Retirees who have planned for their retirement, working to ensure enough money is available so they do not have to rely on the pension should still receive the same concessions that they are currently entitled to. This recommendation appears to support those in the community that do not plan for an improved standard of living and are content to be supported by the Government. Self-funded retirees during their working life and now have paid their taxes and deserve the same concessional travel as others in the community.

Train travel over 100 kilometres

I live in the Southern Highlands and travel to Sydney by train. It is proposed that the cost of this travel will increase significantly for journeys over 100 kilometres over the next two years. The Report states that the roads in outer areas are less congested therefore cars are a more practical option. The M5 motorway due to its constant congestion is a poor alternative to travel from the Southern Highlands. In addition the Government has done nothing to improve the ageing fleet of trains that service the area from Campbelltown. So in comparison to the metropolitan trains that are constantly being upgraded, the commuters in the Southern Highlands will pay extra to travel in trains that are ageing, always having mechanical problems and are of an inferior quality.

In summary, the objective of the Government is to encourage greater use of public transport, however the draft decisions and recommendations outlined in the Report will not achieve this goal and will lead to increased usage of motor vehicles on an already congested road system in Sydney and the outer areas. The intention appears to be increasing revenue over the next two to three years and penalising those in full time work, self-funded retirees and families.

Yours faithfully

Judith Dagg