

Kevin Hartley

Submission Number 2 to IPART regarding;

More efficient, more integrated OPAL fares

Transport - Draft Report

December 2015

To the Chairperson,

I wish to make the following submission to the tribunal with particular reference to;

Proposed changes to the eligibility for the Gold Opal Card

Statement 1.

I consider that the recommendation by IPART to disallow Seniors eligibility for the Gold Opal Card is wrong.

The survey carried out by Roy Morgan Research for IPART asked very few questions in relation to the Gold Opal Card and therefore IPART should not suggest dramatic changes to the way Gold Opal Cards operate as they do not have the data to gauge the effect on the aged community.

Throughout the Draft Report there are many references to the term "Senior" and "Pensioner" however in Section E, Glossary of the Draft Report there is no definition of either.

I am a "Senior" by way of holding a NSW Seniors Card, also by holding a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

I am a "Pensioner" by way of having two small pensions paid by my Superannuation Fund, one is officially known as a "Allocated Pension" the other is officially known as a "Term Allocated Pension", as there can be a considerable amount of confusion regarding the word "Pensioner" and "Senior" they should be defined in your Glossary.

I consider my wife and myself to be both a "pensioner" and a "senior" but I suspect that if your report's recommendation is taken up by the Government we will no longer be eligible for the Gold Opal Card and will be forced to pay considerably higher cost for using public transport.

I am sure many people think of “pensioner” to mean an Aged Pensioner but it can mean many other types e.g. Disability Pension, Disability Support Pension, Wife Pension, War Widow/er Pension and probably many more types of pension.

As there were some questions relating to “pensioner” in the Roy Morgan Research survey and there is total confusion in the wider public as to who is referred to by the term “pensioner”, I strongly suggest any question asked in the survey relating the term “pensioner” should be disregarded in total as the answers are probably confused and therefore flawed.

The survey did not differentiate between Seniors or Pensioners when considering the demographics of the persons in the survey (see Section C. Demographic Questions)

From the Roy Morgan Research data,

69% of public transport users agreed the current arrangements for Pensioner and Gold card user should be retained

84% of Gold Card users agreed with the current arrangements

22% of Gold Opal Card users indicated they would travel less by public transport if the daily cap was increased.

There were no questions in the Roy Morgan Research survey suggesting there would be any change in the eligibility for the Gold Opal card.

Where in the data were there any questions that indicated that eligibility for the Gold Opal Card could be changed?

As the majority of people asked agreed with the current arrangements on what basis was the recommendation to change eligibility for the Gold Opal card made?

There is no data to indicate the effects of changing the eligibility criteria, therefore the recommendation to change eligibility is totally flawed and should be rejected.

Statement 2

I also consider that the recommendation by IPART to disallow Seniors eligibility for the Gold Opal Card because of their “relatively high incomes” is wrong.

Also from the Roy Morgan Research data,

80% of Gold Opal users are not employed

70% of users are retired

Only 16% work part time

53% of users have incomes below \$65,000

Only 17% of users have incomes above \$65,000

So to allege in your Draft report at 2.8.3 that “the current system is unfair as it allows some customers on relatively high incomes to access concessions that are far more generous than those available to many low income earners” is not backed up by any data from the Roy Morgan Research papers.

Many Seniors who do not qualify for the Aged Pension are “asset rich and income poor” and as a consequence, qualify for the “Commonwealth Seniors Health Card”. This card is “means tested” and issued by Centrelink and should also be considered as an eligibility criteria for the Gold Opal Card.

To impose a huge increase from the present \$2.50 daily cap to a \$9.00 daily cap as proposed with the “Concession Opal Card” is appalling, and represents a 260% fare increase on some of the most vulnerable members in our community and cannot be justified by any Government “spin”.

Where in the data were there any questions that indicated how the assumption could be made that “some customers” were on “relatively high incomes”?

There is no data to show this to be so, therefore the statement about “relatively high incomes” is totally flawed and should be rejected.

Conclusion

The Eligibility for the Gold Opal card should not change from the current arrangements.

I look forward to a reassessment of your recommendations in regard to eligibility for the gold Opal card in your final recommendations to Government.

Yours faithfully,

Kevin Hartley

31/12/2015