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Submission: I feel strongly that the proposed changes to eligibility for the Gold Opal Card will have much more negative effects for the community than any positive benefits.

Currently there is a significant cohort of older citizens, retired or semi-retired, who are availing themselves of public transport because of the obvious very reasonable costs incurred.

They are utilising transport that would in many instances be significantly underutilised, at little extra operating cost for the government. As a result, this large cohort of people is greatly enabled in a variety of activities, be it recreational on their part, or contributing to extended family or other worthwhile and productive community activities.

In purely recreational activities these older citizens will be interacting with the community, stimulating local economies, preserving their own health through the results of such activity .both for mental health and basic physical health eg attending exercise groups.

The value of volunteer contributions to our society is now immense, and much of this input comes from the retired and semi-retired members of the community. Their involvement would undoubtedly be reduced if they faced much increased personal costs to be so engaged.

With the very common occurrence of both parents in a household working outside the home, there is a growing involvement of grandparents in caring for younger children, thus enabling the children's parents to be occupied in earning a living for the family. Again access to no burdensome transport costs is a significant factor in allowing these older family members to take on these responsibilities and contribute to invaluable social cohesion.

I would urge that policy makers think beyond the simple beancounting accounting approach and instead consider the vast economic and social implications of these proposed changes- older people staying at home, more isolated, less productive and less interactive with their communities. I feel the cost will far outweigh any savings.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Phillip Cameron.