

Let me start by saying how disappointed I am in IPART that it has even agreed to look into seniors/Opal card fares. Even Blind Freddie can see that the government wishes to increase the fees and needs a scapegoat to do this. It is not part of IPART's role to evaluate such fares and it definitely should not be IPART's role to act as a tool of government. After all, the I in IPART is supposed to stand for independent. If the government wishes to increase the fees, let it take responsibility.

Some facts for IPART to consider if it is to continue with this charade: the last time seniors fares were increased was by a factor of 150%. The proposed increases are nearly 10% above CPI. Nowhere in IPART's consideration does it look at the benefits that the \$2.50 fare provides to seniors, small business and reduction in road use.

For seniors, the \$2.50 fare offers them the chance to have "little adventures". This can be a one-day trip to regions outside the Sydney metropolitan area where they can visit galleries, museums and tourist attractions. On these trips, they spend money in small businesses. For seniors outside the metropolitan area, it could be a trip to the city. Such trips provide mental and physical stimulation which is what any government would want.

The current government spent the best part of last year almost frightening elderly people into taking up the seniors Opal card. I, like many others, took up the Gold Opal card and it seems I am now faced with more than trebling the price. This also means I have to have a much larger reserve amount held by the government as a top-up measure: a windfall to government at elderly people's expense. To compensate for the proposed increase, I will have to reduce my usage of the Opal card and not go out as much thereby negating the government's original good intentions regarding the elderly section of the population.

Essentially, this is another attack on self-funded retirees who have foregone excesses throughout their working lives so as to ensure some comfort in retirement. Such people seem to be the target not only of State but Federal governments with the consequence that their retirement ends up being one of scrimping and saving to get by and having to forego even small pleasures.

Should IPART wish to continue in this unfair attack on seniors, at the very least, those that hold a Federal Health Care card should be included along with pensioners and war veterans.

This request by the government for IPART to review the seniors Opal card fare shows scant regard for older people who are under-valued by government and it seems by IPART as well.

Thank you
Peter Cullerton