

Author name: W. Holland

Date of submission: Friday, 5 February 2016

Submission: Dear members of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal,

I write to voice my strong opposition to the recent proposal that the Seniors Opal Card be increased. Such an increase will have a very significant impact on many areas of my community and economic involvement.

Seniors are a vital part of the economy, and almost all seeking a Seniors Card are not wealthy. Some in reduced circumstances are battling job loss and redundancy as an older worker with the issue of ageism, with volunteering an important part of their health whilst seeking work. Many need to care for elderly parents, family and grandchildren.

Such an increase may have a short term economic benefit, but will have a long term severe social, health, transport, community and economic impact.

The current Gold OPAL Card actually creates lower costs to the NSW Government as Seniors travel.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Seniors contribute directly to the economy as they travel for volunteering, to look after grandchildren or ageing parents, to places of study and to events like Sculptures By The Sea. As Seniors travel around they contribute directly through shopping, buying food etc.

A Senior not travelling is not contributing in this way. With 6.1 million volunteers moving around, it is not hard to imagine the economic contribution Seniors in this group make.

REDUCED HEALTH SYSTEM COSTS

Moving is an important part of maintaining health. The current Gold Opal Card encourages movement and hence better health. Also

- Travel to care for elderly parents which keeps them out of the hospital system and
- Reduces the costs of support from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)
- Leaving the car at home and walking to a station and everywhere else is a preventative measure and contributes to good health and keeps me out of the hospital system
- Healthy exercise through the use of affordable public transport reduces doctors visits, and
- Increases mental health and decreases visits to psychologists.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Flinders University study has identified that 6.1 million volunteers in Australia contribute \$290 billion per year to the economy (Nov. 2014). This is more than the mining industry.

- If Transport costs increase for Seniors, it will make it harder for volunteers to travel to their volunteer 'work', as something else will have to be compromised and will
- Impact on the social good that comes through volunteering.
- If volunteering becomes harder could this possibly result in the need for paid government services in some areas of the community?

INFRASTRUCTURE

Travel is important for a Senior, for their health through movement and walking.

- An increase in the Opal Card for Seniors could force more Seniors into a car and onto the road. This will impact on road traffic, increase need for new infrastructure builds and expansions, road maintenance, road safety in general with increased car numbers on the road and the need for more parking.
- Even one less car on the road makes a difference.

Warren Holland

4 February, 2016

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