



**Our Ref:** CR:km 9001/8 Pt17 & 1129/41  
**Contact:** Craig Ross  
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6 June 2003

Mr Thomas G Parry  
Chairman  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
PO Box Q290  
QVB POST OFFICE NSW 1230

Dear Mr Parry

## ***PENRITH CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES***

I refer to the IPART Review of Public Transport Fares Issues Paper and previous discussions with Dennis Mahoney of your Department. As previously agreed, attached is Council's submission on the Review of Public Transport Fares. Your agreement to accept a late submission to allow additional information to be obtained from a Public Transport Forum held at Council on **22 May 2003** is appreciated.

The Public Transport Forum received a presentation from TransportNSW and Westbus, the major private operator in the LGA. Council also sought submissions from all the schools in the LGA.

As a result of the Forum and the submissions received, the following additional comments are made:

### ***Equity in Fares***

The inequity between Government and non-Government bus fares is highlighted in concession fares for the following groups:

- 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year apprentices receive concessions on Government transport, but not on non-Government transport;
- students aged between **16** and **18** travel at concession rates on public transport but not on most non-Government transport;
- full-time students under **30** have access to concession fares at all times on Government transport, but on other transport this is only available for travel to and from classes.

The fact that many socially and economically disadvantaged regions of the state are serviced solely by non-Government transport makes these inequities even worse. Transport concessions are the only type of concessions that differ according to where somebody lives. Other concessions, such as concessions on utilities and rates, are offered equally, regardless of region.

The Forum was advised that the private operators could provide equitable concession fares if similar subsidies were paid to them that are in line with the Community Service Obligation payments allocated to Government services.

### ***School Bus Services***

Submissions received from some schools in the area, together with issues raised at the Public Transport Forum, have revealed the following concerns associated with the non-commercial contracts in the LGA:

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- *Journey takes too long*  
This relates to both single bus journeys and particularly to journeys where students are required to change buses and delays occur.
- *Lack of advice ~~from~~ bus operator when changes to bus timetables are made*
- *Children standing on bus*  
This is a particular issue for long trips to schools in the LGA, some services taking up to one hour. Concern was also raised regarding the safety aspects of children in this circumstance.
- *Excursion fares*  
Concern was raised that bus fares for school students travelling by bus to and from sporting venues or other excursions is extraordinary and often too expensive for parents to pay. This often results in some students being ineligible for the excursion or event.
- *Communication is poor*  
Several schools raised concerns that communication with the private operators regarding school bus services is very poor and often there is never any resolution of problems. It was felt that more effort is needed to have problems resolved.

#### ***Disability Access***

Comments from the Forum indicated that it would be desirable for the private operators to have a Disability Action Plan in place. Such plans have been developed for the Government services but are not in place for private operators.

The development of these plans will enable people with disabilities to make decisions regarding where they live and their mobility based on established projections for improved services in the area.

#### ***Movezone***

Considerable concerns were raised at the Forum and through submissions regarding the Westbus Movezone proposal and it is understood that the current proposal is a 12-month pilot and a review will be undertaken at the end of the 12-month period (December **2003**).

Whilst the issues raised at the Forum regarding the Movezone have not been included in this submission, the Forum requested that consideration be given to the review being open and transparent and engage the full community in the process.

If clarification of any of the above issues is required, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number and once again I thank you for the opportunity to lodge a late submission as a result of the Public Transport Forum.

Yours faithfully



Alan Travers

**General Manager**

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**PENRITH CITY COUNCIL - SUBMISSION TO IPART REVIEW OF ISSUES PAPER ON FARES  
FOR TAXIS, PRIVATE BUSES AND PRIVATE FERRIES IN NSW**

Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the “*issuepaper*” to assist stakeholders in making their submissions on fares for private transport providers in Western Sydney. Council supports the concept of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal assisting the Minister for Transport in setting fares for the private transport industry, particularly in regard to private buses in Western Sydney, which are a major public transport provider for residents in the region.

The importance of public transport has been recognised in State strategies and has been reflected in the State Government’s Transport Planning document, “*Actionfor Transport 2010*” and the State Government’s Air Quality Improvement Strategy, “*Actionfor Air*”.

In the last 20 years, the Penrith LGA has experienced a significant population growth. This growth has been predominantly in the residential sector (as in other growth areas in the greater western Sydney Region) and has not been matched with employment generating developments.

The lack of local employment opportunities in the Penrith LGA, compared to the workforce, has led to a need for the workforce to travel long distances (beyond the City boundaries). While the number of jobs in the Penrith LGA has increased over the last 5-10 years, the 1996 Census Data identifies that over 62% of the local workforce commutes to employment centres in Parramatta, central Sydney, North Sydney, and generally to the centres in eastern and northern Sydney.

In addition to the imbalance between residential and employment generating developments, the traffic network and public transport system has not kept up with the population increases, and further burdens the journey to work. Changes to travel behaviour over the last twenty years have also seen a threefold increase in car usage compared with population increases.

Council has been responding to this issue with strategies that will encourage greater use of public transport as an alternative mode to the single occupant motor car. Council’s current four year (2000 to 2004) Strategic Plan, has re-emphasised the need to improve accessible transport to the City and has included in its Management Plan actions to secure improved regional and local transport links and services to accommodate existing and future urban developments.

Council has been faced with further burdens in improving public transport given that the future release areas are all located remote from major public transport nodes such as the Western Railway Line. This has highlighted the need for effective, efficient and attractive public transport services to provide the appropriate connections between these areas and the major nodes.

The Penrith LGA is serviced by the privately operated bus companies of Pearce and Westbus. Generally, Pearce service the Emu Plains area and Westbus the rest of the LGA.

Council has reviewed the issues paper on the public transport fares by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and raises concerns in the areas of attractiveness and equity of public transport services.

## **Private Buses**

### **Existing Fare Structure**

#### *Fare Levels*

Westbus/Pearce bus fares are generally consistent with State Transit Authority (STA) buses for short trips on single fares. However, they are considerably higher for longer trips relating to inequities in the pricing structure. Westbus/Pearce services also do not offer the discount for multiple trips, multi-mode travel or weekly tickets that STA provides. Therefore residents in the Penrith LGA are paying higher fares without the flexibility of using multi-mode public transport outside their local area.

Council has previously raised concerns with the Department of Transport in relation to the differences in fare and concession charges provided by the current public transport services in the Penrith LGA when compared to State provided services elsewhere in the Metropolitan Area. This inequity particularly relates to the excursion tickets available to seniors/pensioners living within the Sydney Metropolitan Area serviced by STA.

#### *Ticket Products*

Penrith LGA residents do not have access to the range of ticket products offered by Sydney bus services. These products include a range of zone tickets (TravelTens) and multimodal weekly tickets and a wide range of concession tickets such as the Pensioner Excursion Ticket which costs \$1.10/day and covers all forms of State provided public transport.

#### *School Bus Concession*

A recent issue has surfaced where High School students (years 11 and 12) have been required to pay an additional fare to compensate for their flexible school hours (earlier than 2:30pm). The bus companies are required to honor their contractual commitments associated with commercial services and conflicts are occurring when these companies try to meet their commitments to the schools.

### **Service**

#### *Service Quality*

Private buses provide destination signs at the front of the bus only. STA buses provide destination signs at the front of the bus as well as the side and rear. This concern has been raised by elderly passengers who are approaching the bus from the rear, forced to hurry to the front of the bus to check the destination.

Council is not aware of the current service levels that are required to be provided to the residents of the LGA. Without a clear understanding of these obligations, Council is not in a position to assess whether these services are being provided or exceeded.

Council has previously made attempts to obtain service level obligations in the contracts for the local operators from Transport NSW. To date this information has not been forthcoming (commercial in confidence) and representations have been made to Michael Deegan, former Director General TransportNSW to provide this information. A response is yet to be received. The community and Council raised

concerns about the Minimum Service Levels (MSL) specified by Transport NSW, which may, in fact, be the maximum service levels provided by private bus operators.

### ***Movezone - Night Services***

On 18 November 2002 Westbus introduced the "Movezone" hourly service after 7.00pm on weekdays and 6.00pm on weekends for Penrith LGA. The concept of the "Movezone" is that buses would no longer run to timetable or a set route of an evening. Instead, buses will meet trains and follow the route most convenient to passengers on the bus and return to the station after dropping off the last passenger. If passengers were planning to go to the station, they would need to telephone the Westbus depot to arrange a bus.

Since the introduction of this service the following concerns have been raised by local residents:

- Patrons from "mountains" express trains have to wait for the next hourly service as these trains arrive shortly after the Movezone buses have left the station;
- Long wait at station due to the inadequate frequency of the hourly Movezone bus service;
- Passengers cannot be spontaneous regarding their evening activities as a bus can only be booked during business hours; this was a particular concern for young people;
- People are concerned about their personal safety as they will have to wait at a bus stop for an uncertain period of time before a bus arrives; this is an issue for both people who are waiting to meet someone that is being dropped off at a bus stop and for people waiting for transport into Penrith.

### **Social Equity**

Westbus customers in the Penrith LGA do not receive the same level of State Government subsidisation as that provided by the State Transit Authority. This is more apparent in concession fares and has serious social equity implications for Penrith LGA residents. This social equity has been exacerbated by the introduction of the "Movezone" service offered by Westbus after 7.00pm on weekdays and 6.00pm on weekends on an hourly service. Council remains concerned at the lack of progress towards outcomes from Transport NSW regarding transport concessions.

### **Summary**

Council does not support the increase in fares for Western Sydney bus passengers without a rectification of existing inequalities between private and Sydney Buses in the metropolitan area and requested IPART to benchmark the services provided by private bus operators in the Penrith LGA against those services provided by the State.

### **Taxi**

The Penrith LGA has a metropolitan area boundary (Nepean River) running through it and Council has been made aware that taxi services have a fare provision that burdens the passenger when they travel across that metropolitan boundary. Council sees this as a significant disincentive, particularly for residents within the LGA. Whilst full details of this fare provision have not been provided to Council, it is understood that

passengers are required to negotiate fares with the taxi driver on journeys that cross the river. This is considered to be neither fair nor equitable when comparisons are drawn with services provided within other locations in the metropolitan area.

Approximately 6% of the taxis in the Sydney metropolitan area (including the Penrith LGA) are wheelchair accessible. All taxis in the metropolitan transport district may operate in any area bounded by that district, including the Penrith LGA. The choice is entirely up to the individual drivers. However accurate number of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WAT) operating in the Penrith LGA at any one time is difficult to establish and depend upon the availability and willingness of drivers to operate in this area.

Council requests that IPART examine the provision of WAT and comment on the 6% provision of such taxis in fleets servicing the Sydney metropolitan area including ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of WATs across the wider metropolitan area in particular the Penrith LGA.

In conclusion, Council requests IPART to benchmark the services provided by private operators in the Penrith LGA against those services provided by the State. Such benchmarking should not be limited to the Pensioner Excursion Tickets but would cover all aspects of the provision of the service including frequencies, service levels, costs, social inequities and any subsidies provided to the service. Similar concerns are raised with the provision and fare structure for taxis.

Council has arranged for a Public Transport Forum to be held on 22 May 2003 to address public transport issues in general in the LGA, and in particular submissions to your inquiry. If any further issues are raised at this Forum that are not covered by this submission, further correspondence will be sent to you to detail those additional concerns.

Should you wish to discuss the issues raised in this submission, you may contact Council's Design & Technical Advice Manager on 4732-7573 or Council's Transportation Planner on 4732-7721.

