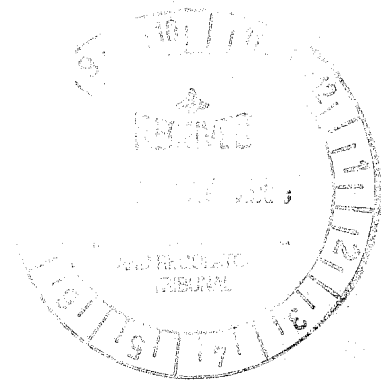


PO Box 253, Potts Point 1335

21 May 2003

The Chairman
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box Q290
QVB PO NSW 1230



Dear Sir

I wish to make the following submission to **any** hearing on the possibility of public transport fares rising in Sydney.

I base my comments on my experiences with **CityRail** on the line between Cronulla and Bondi Junction over the past six months since moving into the Sutherland Shire. There is no way that CityRail can justify a price increase when their service is so shocking. They have previously promised to lift their game in exchange for price increases yet it seems that services are being degraded rather than upgraded, so in future any price rise should only follow an appreciable and proven lifting in service.

1. Timing is erratic. In six months less than ten percent of the trains that I have traveled on have arrived at their destination within three minutes of timetable. Having read their website I realise that CityRail fudge their figures by only measuring at one station, by only measuring at certain times of the day, and by finding dozens of reasons for ignoring their usual running times claiming force majeure. My comments are based on off-peak services when one would expect that trains would run better due to less traffic but it would seem that CityRail only concentrate on times when they are being monitored and could not care a less about the majority of the day.

For instance, let's take yesterday, Tuesday 20th May as an example. The 9:20am Bondi Junction to Cronulla service is due in at Cronulla at 10:19am. It actually arrived at 10:38am, that is 19 minutes late. The following 9:50am service was due at Miranda at 10:41am but was 5 minutes late at 10:46am. The 10:36am service from Cronulla to Bondi Junction was due at Town Hall at 11:23am but again was 5 minutes late at 11:28am. Three services that I know of, all in off-peak times, all on the same morning, none of which seem to be included when CityRail calculate their "on-time running" statistics.

There is no independent ratification of the SRA submissions regarding “on time running” and since their submissions are in marked contrast with anecdotal evidence I would suggest that those submissions be ignored until proof is provided.

2. Timetabling is subject to constant change and not notified to regular commuters. For instance the paper-based timetable that is handed out at rail stations lists a 7:05pm weekday service from Cronulla to Bondi Junction. Persons arriving to catch this train will find that it leaves at 7:09pm these days and terminates at Central - not much help for someone wanting to get to Bondi Junction, Edgecliff, Kings Cross, Martin Place or Town Hall. Over the past few months this train has also traveled at times to City Circle, as well as Bondi Junction. It is unpredictable to say the least. Another instance is that at least once per fortnight a service that I am on from the City to Cronulla terminates without notice at Sutherland (ie, the Guard has been announcing that we are going to Cronulla right up until the time we arrive at Sutherland at which time the announcement changes, the service ceases, the passengers are off-loaded, and forced to wait for a considerable length of time for the next service), or sometimes Hurstville. This is usually an afternoon service. There is usually no notice of these changes, and they are in direct contradiction to the indicator signs at stations when commuters board which should give up-to-date information.
3. Mechanical problems are frequent. Just yesterday (yet again) the 5:33pm service (or the one before, by the time I eventually got home I'd forgotten which train I had started off on) from Bondi Junction to Cronulla was terminated at Hurstville and passengers off-loaded to wait for the next train.
4. The promised security presence on trains after 7pm is non-existent or so low-key as to be non-existent. I catch about four evening services per week. My estimate is that I do not see any security presence passing through my carriage at all on almost fifty percent of the journeys. That figure includes taking into account one pass-through during the fifty minute journey (not exactly a method of operation designed to make passengers feel “safe” when most passengers will never see that security person unless they, like me, are on the train for almost its full journey). In the years since these Chubb Security Guards were introduced I can only recall ever seeing one of them, a female Tongan, request passengers to take their feet off the seat or cease other anti-social activities, a request that sent the whole carriage into shock for the rest of the journey, such was the rarity of such action.

Throughout February of this year I emailed the previous Minister on an almost weekly basis reporting late night **trains** that I'd been on **servicing** Cronulla with no apparent Chubb security presence. On average, three out of four night trains were in this category. Nothing was done, little has changed since. The only thing that has changed is I've stopped bothering with the emails since CityRail and their political masters seem not to care.

5. **Part** of the security presence that CityRail has promised which is composed of “Transit Officers” is in fact often a hazard **rather than a help**. Many **commuters are more likely to** be assaulted by persons in those **uniforms than they are likely to be** assaulted by “home-boys” or similar. Regular complaints to CityRail management about these activities are ignored as it seems management is more concerned with being able to claim hundreds of Officers on duty than worrying about what those Officers actually get up to whilst on duty. In addition, many of these Officers seem to regard their prime duty as being the issuing of infringement notices and will ignore complaints of anti-social activities in other carriages if there is the slightest chance of issuing a ticket in the carriage where they are operating.
6. Whilst CityRail go on about missing revenue and seem to expect the honest amongst commuters to subsidise the dishonest, in fact many persons don't pay fares as they are unable to because ticket offices do not operate for much of the day at many stations, automatic ticket machines are often out of order, automatic ticket machines **even if** seeming to operate will reject many legal tender notes for unknown reasons, and security persons emptying automatic ticket machines **often** turn them off during peak periods in order to maintain them as their priority is to empty the money bins rather than allow commuters to obtain tickets.

For instance, it is common on a Sunday evening to find not one manned window at both suburban and country platforms at Central Railway Station (supposedly the hub of the network), and gates wide open. If Cronulla can be manned at that time why can't Central? This is just encouraging passengers not to pay, so it's no wonder many don't.

7. The supposed “information service” run on behalf of CityRail, **131500**, is more a “disinformation service” as it rarely gives up-to-date information, often has no idea of what is going on, and has no idea of why trains are late or when they might eventually turn up. I phoned once from Miranda Station to ask where a train was that was then twenty minutes late only to be told it was “probably delayed with passengers taking a while to board” yet it turned out that train had been canceled forty-five minutes before and had not even left Bondi Junction. The claimed “dirty carriages” service never seems to result in those carriages actually getting cleaned that day, with commuters regularly finding the same mess they phoned about on Day One, still in the carriage twenty-four hours later, and often forty-eight hours later.
8. Station staff are often uninformative (perhaps they are in turn not kept up to date by their superiors) and don't seem to care. “Don't ask me” seems to be the common refrain. Quite apart from often having no idea when missing trains will arrive, there was an instance recently during scheduled maintenance when I had to ask four different staff before one at Town Hall was able to inform me which platform trains to Cronulla were running from that Saturday. Yet this is **an** instance where the information should have been known days, if not weeks, in advance and a simple notice up at the station entrance would have avoided most commuter enquiries.

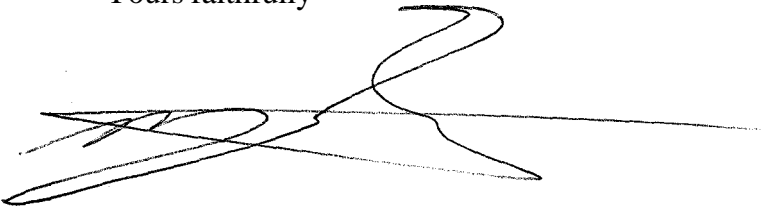
9. The PA system on many trains is inaudible, and on many stations there are no speakers towards the ends of the platforms, **only near the ticket office**. Prime examples in my locality include Cronulla, Wooloware and Miranda. How are passengers supposed to know what is going on when CityRail makes little effort to keep them informed?
10. Indicator Boards are often uninformative, erroneous, or turned off. One minor example was last Friday (16* May) when the indicator at Kings Cross told us the 7:40am train would be 8 carriages (so passengers spaced themselves along the platform accordingly) but only 6 carriages turned up. In the evening the indicators at Sutherland Station often simply say "Special" with no time, etc, when in fact the next train goes to Waterfall and the one after to Cronulla. Last Tuesday, when we had some parts of the network effected by floods, Sutherland simply turned their Indicator Board off, relying on loud speaker announcements to keep passengers "informed" - pity the poor deaf people or those who could not make out what was being said over the (at times inaudible) PA!
11. Air conditioning is non-existent on what seems to be a majority of the carriages currently in use, and when one boards a train with air conditioning it is set so as to be most uncomfortable. For reasons best known to themselves CityRail seems to have perfected the **art** of getting the heating to run at thirty degrees plus on trains which will be overcrowded for much of the journey; on empty trains however they will run the air conditioning at about ten degrees!
12. The cleanliness of CityRail stations and trains leaves a lot to be desired. I do admit that there has been a slight improvement in the removal of large piles of rubbish from some trains (especially inter-city trains) but many window-ledges are so thick with grime as to suggest that they haven't been wiped down for months. Hurstville Station often resembles a rubbish tip on a good day. Graffiti seems to have become a permanent part of many carriages - I've been looking at the same design in some cases for six months on the interior of the same carriages.
13. CityRail seem to be basing part of their case on Cost Recovery. I maintain that if all the Tribunal is going to do is grant without question an increase based on CityRail's claimed increased costs then there is no incentive for CityRail to control their costs.

For instance, on Friday the 16th of May a four carriage train (left Cronulla 7:36pm) to Bondi Junction seems to have had two Guards (based on the different voices doing announcements at Wooloware and Caringbah, Sydenham and Redfern - please note I am taking into account any change of shift at Mortdale). Why? If CityRail's rostering is so bad that they have to double-up people on a shift to keep them employed I see no reason why the paying public should have to foot this bill. Similarly, I can understand one person at the Cronulla Station ticket office with his feet on the desk reading the paper whilst he waits for the next customer, but often there are four of them hanging around with nothing to do - there's **only one window** so only one can serve at a time! These sorts of waste should not be regarded as a true cost able to be claimed back from passengers.

14. The SRA's submission of 2002 (page 29) said that the agencies appear committed to improving service standards. I would submit, based especially on the above points, that there is absolutely no evidence of this, in fact most evidence is to the contrary. There seems to be a general lack of a customer service ethic at all levels of CityRail, and there is no real evidence of any effort being made to improve the situation. Sure, lip-service is given at hearings such as these, **but** there is no real improvement at the "coal-face".

I should point out that I have raised each of these issues in the past with the responsible Minister to no avail. The ruling rationale behind CityRail's operation seems to be that they don't care about giving a service to the traveling public as they can rely on conning non-users and gain regular ticket price increases in order to fund top management's lavish perks.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M John Ready', written over a horizontal line.

M John Ready