



# Students' Representative Council University of Sydney

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## **2008 REVIEW OF BUS FARES**

The Students' Representative Council represents the 35,000 undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. Among many other functions we provide casework advice to students about their financial well-being. Changes to bus ticketing prices will directly affect a large amount of our members.

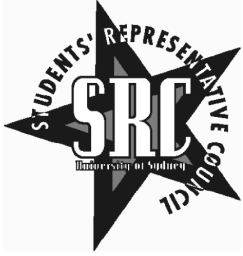
The SRC is committed to working for a cleaner, sustainable environment. The use of public and other low emission methods of transport is an essential part of this. As such the SRC believes that students should be encouraged to use buses in place of personal vehicles wherever possible. It should also be remembered that owning and maintaining a vehicle is more expensive than most students can afford. This leaves them with no option but to pay the higher bus ticket prices.

By decreasing the number of public vehicles on the road there would also be a decrease in the number of motor vehicle accidents. The benefits of this would obviously include better safety for travellers, but also mean a lower cost to the community on Ambulance services, hospital emergency services, road wear and tear, and insurance premiums.

The raising of bus ticket prices may be seen as being commensurate with the increase in fuel prices. However, the SRC believes that this is not an appropriate way to view it. For families that can actually afford a vehicle of their own, fuel prices have been most devastating to working families, unable to use additional funds to offset increased personal transport prices. Instead working families will have to dig into food money to be able to meet the increase in bus ticket prices.

The cost of rental housing in Sydney has been spiralling upwards for a number of years. However, income support lags behind, with increases smaller than cost of living indexes, and qualification for the payment being more inflexible than ever before. Even those that qualify for the highest level of student support are living below the poverty line. On this income they need to pay for their housing, food and study material. From the little money that is left over they would pay for "extras" like public transport. Sometimes students will walk long distances (more than an hour) to avoid paying the few dollars that the ticket would cost. Unfortunately this can make them vulnerable in a high-crime area, such as the surrounds of the University of Sydney, especially at night. This also calls for a large commitment of their time. With the increased workload of University students nowadays, this is often time that is not actually available.

The SRC would also like to note that the Ministry of Transport does not offer transport concessions to all full time students. International students pay a Goods and Services Tax on the things that they purchase while living here and pay Income Tax on any income they earn. However, they pay full price on public transport. The SRC believes that this is discriminatory towards the thousands of students who come here every year. These students contribute to the rich fabric of the University Community and the broader community itself, with the diversity of their culture and experiences.



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They contribute a significant part towards our economy and should be encouraged to study in Australia, not made to feel unwelcome.

Overall, the SRC believes that the cost of bus tickets should at least remain at the level they are now. As a public service they should be funded primarily through a progressive taxation system not through a user pays model. **We therefore urge the Ministry of Transport to freeze bus ticket prices for the next 2 years.**