

Sent: Tuesday, 4 November 2008 10:11 PM

Subject: Review of rail fares

Greetings from the edges of rail commuter land... that area which IPART says has pretty well the lowest median income but for which you want to increase weekly tickets by just about the greatest percentage (i.e. Newcastle).

Commuting long distances to work is not that much fun, believe me. Long hours, hard seats, inconsistencies in heating and air conditioning, cleaning standards, volume of announcements, frequent delays are just the start. There is a good article on page 4 of today's MX free newspaper about leaners, snorers, fartars, sneezers etc that you should read. yes its all true.

I've also commuted short distances to work on both train and bus in Sydney. Overcrowding, cancellations, buses not stopping doesn't help there either. I must admit though, that I do admire the orderly queues of prospective passengers on Military Rd at Neutral Bay and Mosman.

but down to the nitty gritty.

1. The rail and bus network save the government money by reducing the need for road expansion and the drain on health services etc by increased road accidents, and lower requirements for parking facilities in the Sydney & Newcastle CBDs and like focal destinations.
2. The rail and bus network contribute to lower greenhouse emissions. Dramatic fare increases will shift passengers into vehicles.
3. Generally speaking the rail and bus network move large passenger volumes faster than the road network can (well I can actually drive faster to Wahroonga than the train but then I'm at the mercy of the RTA from there to the city, Parramatta etc)....
4. The rail and bus network assists the government in achieving decentralisation of populations and the generation of services industries in outer areas.

Have these benefits been taken into account?

5. Who gets free rail travel ? This week the government directed that senior public servants travel economy class instead of business class on certain types of flights. Perhaps it should now review who gets free rail travel... (current possibly) former politicians etc, railway employees and former railway employees, state Police (Federal Police have to buy their tickets). On what basis is the free travel provided ? Is railway employee free travel reported for fringe benefits tax and Centrelink purposes (every time my employer provides me with free travel to and from work its reported) ? Just how and how often does 'Police free travel' benefit the state, most of the ones I see are trying to remain incognito, sleeping, or generally trying to ignore anti-social behaviour so that they too can get home (quite a few after working extended shifts)? Oh, and how may school children travel to 'school of choice' as opposed to their nearest school etc by way of free travel?

6. I don't think anyone is adverse to some rise. whilst my pay has risen below the CPI for some years, the CPI increase in rail fares has been reasonable.

7. Transit Officer efficiencies. Now there's a lemon with plenty of juice that you can squeeze. Why, because they increase rail revenue. What's the squeeze ? Get them to do the job properly... eg they pass through a train once and then stand at the end gas bagging for the rest of their journey (for security purposes alone, they could move backwards and forwards, let alone discovering more infringements to hand out fines for). Conversely they get on, stand at the end gas bagging for ages then swoop on one or two lost souls and miss the rest. eg get them to start at both ends of carriage or train instead of one so that they are not telegraphing their moves (oh and no stopping and chatting to mates whilst the guy without the ticket gets away, or the smokers, drinkers, graffiti artists hide the

evidence etc). eg identify high risk areas (the Cronulla, Newcastle and Hunter lines on Friday / Saturday nights to start with.....) hit them hard regularly and ticket sales will increase and (hopefully, well maybe beyond hope) passenger behaviour will improve (less vandalism, less mess to clean up).

8. How Citrail shoots itself in the foot (and I'm sure this is reflected on some other lines too)...
Trains leaving Central at 546pm and 715pm for Newcastle have increased numbers of stops thereby deterring intercity passengers) Train leaving Central at 6.30pm for Newcastle is often reduced from 6 cars to 4 (there is nothing like travelling cattle class to the Central Coast). Train leaving Newcastle for Sydney at 512am (once or twice a month at least, sometimes even several times in one week) changes from express to almost all stations service from Wyong onwards and arrives up to 45 minutes late in Sydney (I bet they don't tell you that one but hide it by redesignating the train).

Recent titbits...

Friday of the October long week.... 630pm from Central to Newcastle changed from 6 to 4 cars, delayed until 6.45 pm, picks up an extra 15 minutes of Central Coast passengers at Central, Strathfield etc.

Tuesday after long week, 512am train from Newcastle to Sydney arrives at Broadmeadow 12 minutes late (no announcements etc) and then runs late to Sydney.

22 October, 512am train from Newcastle to Sydney delayed due to 'incident at Hawkesbury River' (yet again) arrives 30 minutes late in Sydney.

31 October, 715pm from Central stopped at Cowan by bushfire for about half an hour (that's understable) seemed a lot longer. Somehow on this train we manage to accrue four, if not five, different groups of transit officers and police. Surely they could have covered a couple of trains instead of the one.

3 November, 445pm train from Central to Newcastle cancelled, 515pm train carries double load and has to make extra stops.

Quite frankly pretty well everybody out here is just scraping by. \$2 a week, yes.... \$8 or \$9 a week is really going to hurt.

Oh and just a real curly one.... Why on earth when buses replace trains between Newcastle and Sydney, do the express buses have to go into Chatswood? I've never seen anyone get on or off there.....