

Sent: Wednesday, 5 November 2008 4:59 PM

Subject: City Rail Fare Increases

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to oppose the price changes to the City Rail network, effective 2009.

Firstly the proposition that fares will increase is well over the CPI and wage increases available to most wage earners. The average increase is approximately 3-4% increase per year. The minimum wage stands at \$14.31 per hour or \$543.79 per week (\$28276 pa) which means that the data of \$32,037 pa for percentile 20 of annual household income would be more indicative than the \$79,000 median stated.

Table 1.1 Average real cumulative percentage change in fares from 2008 to 2012

Distance	Single Weekly Off peak return		
Up to 15 km	13%	10%	-18%
From 15 km up to 35 km	18%	18%	-15%
From 35 km up to 175 km	14%	25%	-17%
175 km and above	-16%	5%	-39%
TravelPass	-	20%	

Secondly the average profile of CityRail commuters is inflated (\$79,174 pa). This profile may apply to people travelling from Woolstoncraft or Como but certainly not from Penrith, Hurstville or Bankstown. These areas are in the mortgage belt and even with the Reserve Bank interest rate cut there is no indication that cost of living will decrease.

Thirdly if CityRail patronage has increased, the increase in the volume of commuters means that more revenue is available for rail infrastructure and capital growth is assured. If prices increase as per the planned announcement, more people will move away from public transport and this has the added burden of roads, carbon emissions and other long term effects of increased vehicle use.

This is recognised in the report which states that services also generate substantial indirect benefits that accrue to the wider community – including reduced road congestion, traffic accidents and greenhouse gas emissions (these benefits are known as external benefits, because they are external to those who use of the services). By increasing the fares by such a large % will undoubtedly reverse these positive impacts.

Fourthly the scrapping of new rail infrastructure means that commuters are again disadvantaged and increasing fares will not bring support for the service.

Fifthly the introduction of km based fares is really only an option when services are regular (both peak and off peak) and not every 30mins for most off peak stations, such as Wentworthville, Richmond, Roseville etc. Services that have adopted this system include BART (San Franscisco) and Hong Kong. Both these examples have excellent subway services with trains every 10-15mins throughout the day. For services that are irregular or are just outside the km bank, that is 35-37km, will now try to drive/take buses etc to the rail station that falls within the boundary. This will add extra vehicule traffic and strain already overflowing parking allotments.

There is no difference if I travel from Parramatta to the City than from Westmead to the City, yet City Rail is indicating that this results in a different cost of providing services to passengers over different distances. The fact that the train runs empty with 1 passenger or 2 passengers is not sound reasoning, even if the cost of electricity to generate the train is differential by 70kgs (average weight of a person), the fact is that the train still operates.

If wanting to increase passenger numbers from what is stated in the report, more should be done to encourage usage rather than increasing fares by up to 26% over 3-4 years. This is supported by the fact that less than 6% of the Sydney population travel by train 5 days a week or more.

Time of day issues remain, in fact City Rail has withdrawn its Smart Saver fare as it did not entice people to make changes to their work patterns. In fact, most people cannot make such changes as dictated by employers and for retail industry, hours of operation.

Quality issues arise in that most trains on the Western line are old, often lack air conditioning, are late or experience delays (hot weather, rain, signal failure etc). Whilst an increase in fares will provide additional revenue opportunities, previous price rises have not improved commuter travel. Therefore no guarantee that the extra revenue will be used to fix those services instead of using the revenue to pay for consultants.

I recognise that prices will increase, but to implement an increase of 20%+ is far too high given the economic uncertainty our country is facing.