

28th October 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Review of CityRail Fares, 2009-2012

I am writing regarding CityRail's intention to raise fares again despite the fact they already raised fares late 2007!

CityRail is proceeding under the erroneous assumption that the average commuter is earning far more than they actually are. In fact my current fortnightly rail ticket represents almost 10% of my salary! Moreover, even if workers were earning such high salaries this should never be a valid reason to raise fares.

Fares can only rise in line with a value for money principle and CityRail is far from being a satisfying reliable service. If one examines, in detail, the average commuter experience when utilizing rail services it becomes blatantly obvious how dismal their performance is.

As workers we need to be able to rely on the train network, as more often than not we have no other facilities available, especially to intercity commuters. Alas, the services consistently fail. At least three days a week my train is more than five minutes late of a morning and at least once a fortnight my train is delayed more than thirty minutes or out rightly cancelled, which leaves me explaining to my employer that CityRail apologised for the inconvenience however the broken door, faulty brake or broken down freight train was beyond my control. This is without taking into account my trip home of an evening, which is without fail at least five minutes delayed every evening! Perhaps CityRail counts this toward their 'on or near time' performance indicators, but since when was near enough good enough?

CityRail has a duty of care to ensure commuters are safe and reasonably comfortable, yet the fact is CityRail is sub-standard in this area as well. One only has to look at the decades old fleet and packed carriages, many of which are not air conditioned, to show the failures of CityRail management as well as the state government. There are no garbage bins in the trains I catch and nor are there any in many train stations across the network. This leads to rubbish jammed between seats, beer bottles rolling about the floor and chewing gum stuck in all sorts of bizarre places.

One also questions the security on board New South Wales' trains. In the past three months I have seen transit officers patrol my train once and fleetingly appear once a fortnight on the other side of ticket gates to catch the public menacers that are fare evaders. However, when I have seen drunk and disorderly conduct, aggressive passengers threatening others as well as drug addicts making use of the toilets and vestibules to nurture their habit the brave transit officers are no where to be seen. As they have checked tickets and moved off to the front carriage to chat before getting off and parading back along the platform so that the whole train knows these heroes have departed. What is more, in all my time of commuting never have I encountered one of those legendary 'plain clothed officers' who are supposed to valiantly jump out from hiding and put an end to the anti-social behaviour at hand. I often wonder if they are in the same category as the mythical surveillance cameras that 'may' be monitoring the silver wrecks that can't even offer air conditioning!

The bottom line is CityRail is not delivering to customers what they are paying for now and are therefore are in no position to expect taxpaying customers to accept a fare increase. After years of negligent mismanagement that never focussed on the public transport system's future, CityRail is expecting to move the burden of their incompetence onto the passengers with an increase in fares. A suggestion, which demonstrates the lack of imagination on CityRail's behalf. CityRail, as well as the state government, need to employ creative management practice to ensure passengers get value for money at the prices they are paying now before they hint at future fare increases that are to be shouldered by increasingly frustrated commuters.