

To Whom it May Concern,

Re. Submission regarding proposed 17% fare increase in January 2009

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I am writing in relation to the proposed 17% fare increase in January 2009. From what I have read, I understand that this would mean my weekly ticket from Seven Hills station (the station I commute to from Monday to Friday to get to work), would be increased from \$41 to \$48 dollars.

I am writing this submission to voice my concern at the fact that this is yet another increase to an already overpriced train service.

I am not falling into the trap of many who continue to insult the service that Railcorp offers. On the contrary, whilst there are a few things that could be improved, I believe that overall, having the train to travel to work all the way to the city is a great service for me, a commuter who lives in Kellyville.

My concern is due to the fact that this is one of many fare increases that have occurred over the years, in particular, in the 2 years since I have moved to Sydney from Melbourne, and not a standard increase which is expected in relation to the economy, etc. When I moved here the ticket was from memory \$38, now it is \$41. The proposed increase to \$48 per week (a \$7 increase!), and even more for those travelling beyond Blacktown further west, is an amount sure to break many people's budgets, and certainly my own.

Yes, I concede that the alternative commute to the city in my car would cause another financial crisis in my own life, but surely the alternative is meant to be of at the very least a positive benefit, a reasonable alternative, a service for the many thousands and thousands who use the train.

Almost \$50 a week for me, and more for those further west, is a substantial amount of money...almost \$200 a month. Those with mortgages, those paying rent, those on government benefits, even those on salaries above \$80,000 (but you will find the average employee earns much less than this) will feel the implementation of your proposal deep within their back pocket, in their bank accounts, on their credit cards, on the previous luxury of getting a take away coffee in the morning to wake up after a long train ride.

Again, I say that I am grateful that I have the option to take the train into the city (although I was disappointed that the train proposal for North West was scrapped) I still believe we should be getting what we pay for. People will not fight back at fare increases if, in conjunction with those increases, the service is improved, more air conditioned or heated trains (as the case may be) are introduced, trains run on time, trains don't end up being 6 carriages at 5:09p.m. from Wynyard west bound. That is when a fare increase would probably be welcomed and praised, even encouraged, even proposed by the average traveller themselves! But to increase the fares and to do

nothing else with it but cause each traveller to budget more efficiently and struggle even more is not something that the general public will be happy to see happen. The only people that the fare increase will *not* affect are those who are privileged enough not to have to use the train, they can afford to use their cars, they may have their own personal drivers, or have a job which pays for these costly luxuries.

I have read that there have not been that many submissions made regarding this issue based on a comparison with the number of people who actually use the train. This is not to say that people will not be adversely affected by the substantial hike in train fares, this does not demonstrate that people will welcome yet another fare increase with open arms. No. It might very well be because people feel hopeless in the face of these continued proposals which ultimately get granted. People feel hopeless; people feel they don't have a say.

That is why I am writing this letter from myself *and* on behalf of the many commuters I read in the Mx who complain of fare prices, I am writing this on behalf of the many travellers I sit next to on the train day after day voicing their concerns over the proposal, yet who don't send in a submission or have the courage to believe that our submissions will be considered realistically.

Don't make every traveller become an 'aussie battler'. Some of us work hard and feel that they are financially stable and budget wisely. But if each year, and in particular this year, the fares increase by \$7, what type of salary and lifestyle are we all to have in the long run.