

5th November 2008

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box Q290
QVB Post Office NSW 1230

To The Tribunal

Re: Review of CityRail fares 2009-2012

I would like to make submission in the case of the review of CityRail fares that are to take place on 1st January 2009.

Having read much of the review I feel it behooves me to point out that there are certain "facts" listed in the review that I have a great deal of difficulty believing based on my personal experience and in talking to other regular train travelers. I catch the train from Tuggerah to Wynyard every weekday and this amounts to a 1.75 to 2 hour trip one way and allows for a great deal of discourse between myself and fellow travellers.

I personally live in a one income family that is considerably less than is listed in the Draft Report, paying a mortgage, rates, personal loans, train fares and other obligated payments. In general, I am left with \$220.00 a fortnight to cover the cost of food, home and car maintenance, petrol, and other personal costs. I do very little entertaining due the lack of funds and am lucky to go to the cinema once every three months. I moved to the Central Coast in 2000 as I could not afford to purchase a house in the Sydney area. The asset value of the house may have increased but that does not translate into ready everyday cash in hand.

A further increase in the amount of fares will place even greater stress on my personal expenses. Although I have tried applying many times for employment positions on the Central Coast I have not been successful and am forced to travel to Sydney each day for employment.

I have heard variations of my story from many of my fellow train travellers in similar situations. My story and their stories are the norm, not the exception.

It is also worthwhile to note that the Central Coast is hit regularly with disturbances in the transport system due to track maintenance between Gosford and Newcastle. Three times this year to date we have been hit with 2 week long track maintenance being carried and another is due between 24th November to 5th December 2008. This is additional to the late night and weekend maintenance that is carried out. These two week long spans put considerable strain on the work/life balance of all Central Coast residents who are forced to travel long distances due to inadequate employment positions being available within the Central Coast region. One way trips place up to 40 to 60 minutes extra travel time onto an all ready considerable trip. I recognise that maintenance must be done but I question the productivity of the methods currently used.

There is also the question as to whether more monies should not leveraged from the freight companies using the lines that cause the need for such extensive track maintenance to be carried out.

Keeping in view the fatigue, decreased work/life balance and extended travel times due to track maintenance these proposed fare increases become very insulting to myself and other Central Coast residents who do not fit the profile for income that has been listed.

Another factor that must be kept in mind when reviewing the fare increases proposed is the current economic crisis, or credit crunch, that Australia is embarking upon. The credit crisis and subsequent recession could last some time and place great stress on incomes, as well as threaten the livelihoods of many persons due to being retrenched.

I submit that such a degree in the proposed increase in fares would be untenable to me personally and to many of fellow passengers. Breaking news is that the New South Wales government is finally forcing schoolchildren to pay for their own fares rather than being budgeted from the taxes to support such a system. This increase should also be taken into account when reviewing the proposed fare increases.