



Students' Representative Council The University of Sydney

Noah White, President, 81st SRC
m: 0438 438 844 e: president@src.usyd.edu.au

Level 1 Wentworth building (G01)
University of Sydney NSW 2006
PO Box 794 Broadway NSW 2007
t: (02) 9660 5222 f: (02) 9660 4260
int: 12871 www.src.usyd.edu.au
ABN: 597 391 306 68

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Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales
PO Box Q290
QVB Post Office NSW 1230

Review of fares for metropolitan & outer metropolitan bus services from January 2010

Dear Tribunal Members,

The Students' Representative Council (SRC) is the representative body for the approximately 30,700 undergraduate students at The University of Sydney. The University of Sydney has numerous campuses, including the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (Circular Quay), the Sydney College of the Arts (Rozelle), Cumberland campus (Lidcombe), Mallett Street (Camperdown), Veterinary Science campus (Camden), plus the hospital sites including Royal Prince Alfred, St George, Westmead, Children's and Nepean.

With little parking available on and around most of its campuses, and many students unable to afford or not wishing to use private cars, the majority of students use public transport. Additionally some students live locally to their campuses and either walk or ride a bicycle.

The SRC believes price control can play a major part in the promotion of public transport services, a campaign the community can only benefit from. This benefit will take multiple forms, some of which are listed below.

A reduction of vehicles on the road will directly reduce pollution through tailpipe and noise emissions. Indirectly, it will also decrease pollution by reducing the production rate of new vehicles and the fuel consumption necessary to run them.

A reduction of traffic will also make the streets easier to negotiate. Fewer traffic jams and congestion will ensue and our cities and surrounding areas would be more liveable.

A reduction in vehicular traffic may also have the effect of increasing the number of people becoming commuter cyclists. Nearly one in three cyclist crashes occurs during peak times¹. By assuring commuters of their increased safety, their cycling habits would increase similarly².

With fewer vehicles using local roads, maintenance costs would also be reduced. Local councils would be able to redirect road maintenance money to other areas of the community

¹ Austroads (2002) Investigation of Cyclist Safety at Intersections.
<http://www.austroads.com.au/abc/index.php?type=main&id=7>

² The Australian Bicycle Council (2005) The Australian National Cycling Strategy 2005 – 2010. p15.

requiring attention. Similarly state road authorities would be able to reallocate money to major road projects making long distance travel safer.

By having increased communal interactions and by enjoying a smooth running and community focused public transport service, members of the community would foreseeably develop a greater sense of community pride and ownership.

It is necessary to reduce the cost of public transport for students.

Many Australian students live below the poverty line while on Centrelink payments. For example, the full rate of Youth Allowance for a student living away from their family home is \$371.40 plus \$74.13 rent assistance for a share house per fortnight³. That is about 66% of the poverty line⁴. After paying for rent within an overly inflated market, students have very little left over for basic items such as food, study expenses, transport and emergency savings.

Making transport affordable to students will not only mean that there will be less direct stress on them to find money for travel, but it will also mean that students will be able to choose to live further away from their campuses, in lower cost areas, if they so choose. Regardless of where they choose to live, price control of public transport can attempt to prevent further stress on students' budgets. It is widely recognised that academic studies suffer because students have to work too many hours to meet basic expenses. In 2006, 40.2% of students surveyed by Universities Australia reported, "their work adversely affected their study"⁵. Price control of public transport can try to minimise further stress.

International students 'pay their way' and contribute to the provision of public transport. They pay fees to study, taxation on wages, goods and services taxes and many other types of spending. In fact International Students are the third biggest contributor to the economy. In 2008 they brought in \$15.4 billion⁶. The current failure to grant international students a concession fare is simply illogical and could be perceived as racist.

The SRC welcomes free bus routes, such as the Route 555 bus that operates in the City of Sydney area, specifically Central to Circular Quay. Anecdotally we know it has been a success, and many students report using this bus to various tourist and recreational venues and activities. People are encouraged to use this shuttle bus service rather than taxis, allowing them a more relaxed mode of transport that offers a predictable schedule of every 10 minutes. The burden of traffic is likely eased from this busy part of the city, making it a more liveable and enjoyable atmosphere.

A similar shuttle service could be introduced for universities. A shuttle loop could be formed through the inner western suburbs by passing the three major university campuses of the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of New South Wales. It would also service the smaller city based campuses such as the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Notre Dame.

³ A Guide to Australian Government Payments, 20th March to 30th June 2009.

⁴ Henderson Poverty Line as at December 2008 was \$673.12 per fortnight with the Head of the Household not in the workforce and including the cost of housing.

⁵ James, R., Bexley, E., Devlin, M. and Marginson, S. (2006) Australian University Student Finances. Universities Australia. Melbourne.

⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Composition of Trade Australia 2007-08, Canberra, November 2008, p9.

A simplified system of ticketing for students would benefit the Ministry of Transport, students and the general community. Students could be charged one low price for travelling all day⁷ or all week on any or all modes of public transport. This price should be in line with welfare payments. For example, 5% of the full rate of Youth Allowance is just under \$9.30 per week. This amount could be indexed to the rate of Youth Allowance that increases slightly every 3 months. This intermodal transport ticket would function in a similar way to the current Pensioner Excursion ticket. In fact while the cost is slightly higher, the SRC would support the legislative change that see students have access to the Pensioner Excursion ticket.

Recommendations:

1. Grant international students public transport concessions.
2. Allow students to use the Pensioner Excursion tickets.
3. Create a free bus route that shuttles from major points in the inner west and railway stations to University campuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Noah White

⁷ A daily option would need to exist as many students do not have classes every day, and many students would on occasion not be able to invest the amount of money for a weekly ticket.