

Action for Public Transport (NSW)

www.aptnsw.org.au

P.O. Box K606,
Haymarket NSW 1240
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Mr James Cox
CEO, Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW
Level 2, 44 Market Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
PO Box Q290
QVB POST OFFICE NSW 1230
Telephone: (02) 9290 8400
Fax: (02) 9290 2061
ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Cox,

2011 Review of Stockton and Private Ferry Fares

Introduction

Our 2011 submission to the review of Stockton and private ferry fares focuses safety issues, and the need to extend integrated ticketing to all private ferry services. An ongoing investigation by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) into Captain Cook Cruises has raised concerns about the level of safety awareness across the private ferry industry. We believe that integrated ticketing, which was recently extended to light rail services in Sydney, should also be extended to private ferries. We express concern at the continued use of the SFCI and FFCI indexes to determine increases in private ferry fares. These indexes have long passed their use by date and have demonstrably failed both passengers and industry. We are so concerned at the current state of this industry that we want a broad- ranging investigation covering all aspects of industry performance including safety. The review should also examine wharf access charges and make policy recommendations.

Safety

An OTSI report into a fire on the *MV Jillian* on 28 April 2010 identified potential “systematic safety deficiencies across the entire Captain Cook Cruises’ fleet”. Subsequent to this report a full investigation into Captain Cook Cruises has been commenced and the final report is yet to be published. We ask that an OTSI audit be conducted on all private ferries in NSW, and that no fare increases be granted until both the Captain Cook and the wider review are complete.

Wharf Access Charges

Wharf access charges have long been a contentious issue for ferries. We ask that IPART obtain information about access charges directly from the owners of public wharves used for ferry services. For the fare review process to be open and transparent, and to allow stakeholders to be involved, this

information needs to be made available. We would support direct funding for infrastructure owned by local government from state and federal governments.

Ticketing

Passengers using private ferries are disadvantaged and inconvenienced because they cannot use integrated tickets on private ferries. We are now twelve months away from the introduction of electronic smartcard ticketing across train, light rail, bus and government ferry services across Sydney. The private ferry industry must be included in integrated ticketing. We ask that IPART support this move. Unless there is action to bring private ferries into the fold, the private ferry industry will go into decline, with many services likely to close.

Fares for 2012

Given the state of the industry we cannot support any fare increase for 2012. We ask that that current fare schedules remain until a wide ranging review of the industry can be undertaken. We would expect that operators should and will approach the government for interim subsidies where the viability of their business is under immediate threat.

Conclusion

The private ferry industry in New South Wales has been in decline for some years now. It has reached crisis point. IPART should recognise the seriousness of this situation and support the wide ranging industry review recommended in this submission.

Regards,

Graeme Taylor
Action for Public Transport