



Shoalhaven Public Transport Working Party
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23 May 2002.

Review Of Fares For Taxis, Private Buses And Private Ferries In NSW
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Please find attached submission to the Review prepared by the Shoalhaven Public Transport Working Party. The Shoalhaven Public Transport Working Party oversees the Shoalhaven Integrated transport Strategy, and has Local Government, community, transport provider and Government Agency representatives.

This opportunity for public input to regulating privately operated public transport is welcomed. IPART's visible role in a transparent fare determination process for all New South Wales public transport is supported.

We suggest the aim of transport regulation should be to maximise benefits to citizens - IPART's ambit for Fares and quality control are elements, rather than independent ends in themselves.

The following points are made to progress a sufficiently detailed, but holistic, and effective approach to public transport regulation:

- The need to differentiate local, metropolitan and regional issues and circumstances.
- We recommend that the Transport Data Centre data collection is extended throughout the state.
- We recommend that a '131 500' Infoline service be available statewide, ideally with the Shoalhaven serving the South Coast and South East NSW.

Where the Tribunal has invited comment specific comments are made against the respective Issues Paper Section number. We have made separate comments about regional Pensioner Excursion Tickets, as we believe the suggested approach will provide a major increase in the effectiveness of the Shoalhaven transport system and improved outcomes for many users.

The Shoalhaven Public Transport Working Party, can be contacted through Kirk Bendall, the Illawarra/Shoalhaven Transport Development Officer, on 4221 2581.

Yours sincerely,

Kirk Bendall,
for the Shoalhaven Public Transport Working Party.

A State-Wide Pensioner Excursion Ticket System

A Pensioner Excursion Ticket should be available on private buses for nominated regions across NSW. The regions should be based on travel patterns needed to access key services eg acute care hospitals, specialist medical and legal services, Centrelink offices, department stores, courts, offices of 3 levels of Government.

The current fares of \$1.10, \$2.20, and \$3.30 have not changed for a considerable period, GST fraction excepted. With annual fare increases this unusual situation could be addressed by packaging into a statewide scheme of regional tickets.

We view this as the most practical way to:

- Improve people's access to services,
- Stimulate public transport with patronage growth,
- Provide health benefits of sustained physical activity and
- Defer the time people need assistance when using transport.

A Pensioner Excursion Ticket will clearly facilitate access to the majority of services that are concentrated in a few locations (see Social Impacts table below).

4.4 Approach to industry regulation

The Tribunal invites comments on the level of regulation required to properly protect consumers from abuses of monopoly power. The Tribunal also invites comments on the level of competition in the taxi, private bus and private ferry industries.

The effectiveness of timetables and peoples access to public transport needs to go beyond current Minimum Service Level requirements. in rural areas such as the Shoalhaven the final resource input may not be much different but networking of separate services, and ensuring villagers can access some form of service to their local towns. Pensioner Excursion Ticket schemes, long distance coaches, community transport and taxis all have a place in the Shoalhaven transport system.

Our population is aging, facing financial and physical constraints. This means support for accessible vehicles and walking and embarking infrastructure is needed.

The financial basis of industry sets operating priorities. Outside major cities we suggest they are - carriage of school children, then tours and charters, and lastly route services.

Taxis and private buses provide vital transport to people with low incomes and longer travel distances in rural and regional NSW enabling access to basic goods and services.

Regarding competition, comparisons with STA and private Sydney operations are moot in our circumstances.

5.1 Taxi Fare Structure

The Tribunal invites comments on whether the existing fare structure for taxis should be altered, eg the balance between flagfall and distance rates, and day and night rates, the imposition of luggage rates, and whether an additional lift fee should apply to wheelchair accessible taxis.

A "lift fee" for wheelchair accessible taxis is possibly discriminatory. Service delivery is most directly influenced by incentives and penalties drivers perceive. The Tribunal should consider measures to support drivers operating Wheelchair Accessible Taxis.

5.2 Private Bus Fare Structure

The Tribunal invites comments on the existing fare structure for private buses, including the range of tickets on offer and relativities with Government owned operations.

Operators should be encouraged to provide more diverse ticketing. Though concessions are not dealt with by IPART any fare increase will have a significant impact on people eligible for concessions. This impact will be greater for people who use non-government services. Community Service Obligation type payments, including the School Student Transport Scheme, ideally are applied for the most effective overall transport results. This should include support for basic services for “working hours”, weekends and holiday periods; across as much of the public transport network as possible. In the Shoalhaven older people and young people are the major bus users. This highlights the need for equitable concession criteria, and the utility of a Pensioner Excursion Ticket.

6.1.2 Service Quality – Private Buses

The Tribunal invites comments on the quality of service offered by private buses, including relativities with Government owned operations.

In addition to the Service Quality Index developed by the Institute of Transport Studies at The University of Sydney, the Tribunal is referred to the British national *Bus Quality Indicator*, which is published at:

www.transtat.dtlr.gov.uk/qbullets/qbus.htm

For another perspective, the Tribunal is referred to the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, at:

www.gccni.org.uk

7.2 Social Impacts

The Tribunal invites comments on the potential social impacts of fare increases, and how such issues should be considered in the fare setting process.

The Social impacts of fare rises can be high. In the worst case a failed connection or personal emergency will mean having to stay overnight, or pay a lot for a taxi - eg ~ \$ 103.07 for 49 Km (Bomaderry to Sussex Inlet, Table 5.1 country rate). This is a lot of ‘emergency’ money, meaning a third or a half of a low income may be spent on transport in that period. As well as financial stress, some people may be in “transport crisis”, where transport costs take up a major part of income, leaving insufficient for other vital needs eg adequate housing, dentistry etc. Low fare elasticity’s should not obviate recognition of high costs for people on fixed and limited incomes, especially where significant time and cost is required to access basic services eg doctor, Centrelink and shops.

In these circumstances the flexibility and ‘backstop’ function of taxis becomes problematic.

Inconsistencies in Concession eligibility between private and government operators from different schemes with same beneficiary group lead to inequities and complicate concession delivery. Concessions are dependent on user categorisation - young people on ‘junior’ rates of pay, apprentices, and TAFE students are all overlapping categories of young people entering the workforce, but have disparate concessions, often for factors beyond their control (eg apprentice and trainee class times are set by TAFE).

Key indicators for Shoalhaven Villages (distance from Nowra/Ulladulla).

Shoalhaven Population Profile 1996 (Base Source: 1996 Census)

Planning Area	1	2	3	4
Main Centres (distance from Nowra Post Office)	0	Culburra / Orient Point ~ 23 km from Nowra	Sanctuary Point ~31 km from Nowra	Sussex Inlet 46 km from Nowra, 39 km from Ulladulla
Population Growth	1.8 %	2.7%	4.2%	7.1%
Population	37, 571	5,916	14,217	3,568
Key Age Indicator	22% <12	~24% aged 65 & over	8.5% 75 & over	44% 55 & over
Unemployment Rate	11.2%	18.3%	19.4%	23% unemployment rate (highest in Shoalhaven), 34% in Labour Force
Children's Services #	85	12	17	3
Youth Services #	119	2	9	9
Community support facilities #	106	2	12	5
Older persons Facilities/services #	60	8	22	5
Health Facilities/services #	25	1	3	1

NB: Area 4 has highest percentage of Households without a vehicle (11.4%) as well as highest level of single parent families without a vehicle.

As the major Demographic trend is continuing growth in the older and aged populations, the Shoalhaven can expect a growing number of passengers for the next 30 years, whose quality of life will be impacted by the costs and utility of their public transport services.

Social exclusion concept.

The concept of Social exclusion is raised here. Whether due to economic, health or cultural factors mean people can be discouraged from full involvement in their communities. Such isolation often leads to declines in the local community's economic, physical and mental health. Transport is a factor that can facilitate, or bar, greater social inclusion. See British *Accessibility & local services and facilities* survey at:

www.transtat.dtlr.gov.uk/tables/2001/fperson/local02.htm

Compounding effects mean when misadventure occurs consequences are greater. For example someone has an unregistered vehicle to access irregular employment, but they are unable to afford registration. A relatively minor accident brings to police attention, meaning person, has lost job opportunities, means of transport and needs to pay fines for unregistered/uninsured vehicle.

For this Review we seek to minimise cost to users and enhance effectiveness of services in rural and regional areas.