



## ANIMATION PROJECT

A project of the Society of St Vincent de Paul

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Dear Sir or Madam

Submission to inquiry **into** public transport fares

I Write regarding the impact of the fare inequities suffered by people living in South - Western Sydney. I am a community worker based in Campbelltown who lives in Summer Hill.

Residents who live in the public housing estates of Claymore, Minto, Airs/Bradbury, and Rosemeadow are severely effected by the price inequities. They perpetuate social isolation, actively work against the development of social capital and add to stigmatisation as well as financial hardship. The cost of public transport is one of the most frequently raised issues at community consultations I attend

Let me give you some examples of the price differences:

Where I live in Summer Hill, a journey of 5 sections costs \$1.84 (based on Brown metro ten \$18.40 for ten trips). From Claymore to Campbelltown, also a journey of five sections the cost is \$3.00. Campbelltown is the nearest train station and commercial centre, The only alternative is a steep 40-minute walk.

A difference of \$1.16 might not appear to be much but to someone on \$185 per week (Newstart and Widows Allowance) it has a significant impact. Over 50% of the populations in these public housing suburbs are not in the workforce. Car ownership is particularly low, for example in Claymore 40% do not have access to a car. Residents need to travel outside of their suburb for such services as a butcher, doctor on weekends, Centrelink, library, training, hairdresser, dentist etc.

For just two return trips a week the difference between what I pay on a government run public bus and what Claymore residents pay on a private run public bus is 2.5% of their income or about \$5.00 per week.

A recent ~~community~~ survey in Claymore indicated that 25% of residents *never* get out of the house for a coffee and chat (Claymore ~~Community~~ Laundromat and Coffee Shop survey 1999).

Pensioners are further disadvantaged because the pensioner excursion ticket is not accepted on privately operated public buses. Those in receipt of the Widows Allowance are no longer entitled to a transport concession card.

The inequalities in fare prices contribute to social isolation and prevent participation in broader community activities. The pricing policy continues to contribute in no small part to the creation of geographically distinct, disadvantaged and highly stigmatized areas. I have attached a story by two Claymore residents about the impact of the *fares* on their day to day lives.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me 02 4628 2928.

Yours sincerely

Julie Foreman  
Animation Co-ordinator  
13/5/02

## Three years to get to Manly

Women in Claymore have started to change many things in their lives. One thing is the widow's pension. Women between the ages of 50 and 60 do not have access to the transport allowance and must pay full fare. This has a big effect on women's everyday lives.

One day, some of us were talking about this problem at the famous Kalon luncheons and how it has isolated us, so we decided to take action. Isabel, our friend, said, 'I'm going to do something about this'. So we started a petition with local community support.

Women don't ask to be widows, so why should they be penalised? We had been getting the travel allowance before, we were paying half fares to go about our daily business. When some of us were told that we weren't supposed to be getting a travel allowance earlier this year, we knew that this would change our quality of life. I got a letter from the department to say that there had been an error and the transport concession was no longer available. The letter said that by us getting the travel allowance, we were in breach of the legislation because we were getting a benefit that we were not entitled to by law. It said the legislation never permitted those concessions to be extended to recipients of the widow's allowance. The letter regretted any inconvenience to us.

Inconvenience. It was more than inconvenient. It was now impossible for many older women to do basic things like moving freely around. It has forced many women to stay at home because they cannot afford to leave their suburb. People don't understand when they are not in that position. Before the change, it cost \$1.50 to go to Campbelltown one way; \$3.00 return. Now it costs \$6.00 return. It costs \$11.00 to go to the city. We paid half before, now we must pay full fare. If your grandchildren live in St Marys, it is not possible to see them as often as before. We just can't afford it. Janise told friends who had invited her to an outing in Manly, 'I have to wait three years till I'm 60 before I can afford to come with you'. It costs \$19 to visit a friend in Macquarie Fields, only 12 kilometres away. We have to leave Claymore because there is just nothing here. We don't have a butcher, a hairdresser, no fresh fruit and vegetables, no dentist or banking. The library is in Campbelltown and so is Centrelink. There is no doctor in Claymore on weekends and if you want to do any training or further education, it costs \$20 to get to the college.

Not having access to a transport allowance has affected women's health and well being. Isolation and depression has increased for many women. Fares are expensive and without some assistance, women between the ages of 50 and 60 will remain isolated as long as this situation continues.

**By starting this campaign, we are not only helping ourselves, we are helping other women. We just want a simple transport allowance for women between the ages of 50 and 60. We just want to be able to do OUT shopping, to visit our family and friends, to have the same quality of life as everyone else. As Janise said to her friend in Macquarie Fields, 'Give me 3 weeks notice so I can lay-by my bus ticket'. We don't want to have to lay-by our bus tickets, so please feel free to sign our petition.**

**June Brown and Janise Nixon (2001 copyright authors)**