

Marnie Cranwell
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Proposed City Rail price increase

To whom it may concern,

I would like to enter a submission in opposition to the proposed raise in fares by City Rail, on behalf of myself and my partner Ryan McKnight.

We believe that there are other options and that there are changes which need to be addressed by City Rail before they can justify a fare increase.

The most obvious changes need to be the following:

(a) Better on time running. The only reason that the trains appear to be running on time is that they claim that if a train is within 5 mins early / late, it is on time. This is not good enough.

(b) Safety measures. I shudder every time I have to ride a Tangara, as I am fully aware of the dangers that I face if there is an accident or terrorist attack on this train. There is no escape route. The windows cannot be broken, the doors cannot be opened. If the accident happened underground and disabled the guard and driver, how long would passengers be trapped in the stifling conditions before there would be any way out? There needs to be clear emergency exits marked and available.

(c) In conjunction with the above scenario, communication levels are ridiculous. If City Rail staff can't let us know that there has been a signal failure which has terminated our train, and clearly give us the options available to us, how will they be able to react in an emergency situation? City Rail are proud of the fact that more people than ever are visiting their website. For me at least, this is due to the fact that you can never get any information from on site staff, but the web site usually makes you aware of delays. Upgrading station screens to flat screen TVs is not a priority.

(d) Improve rail inspectors customer service skills. I have been on the train when they have fined a 14 yr old boy for having a student ticket with no student ID. This is ridiculous - he was obviously a student and was mortified by the incident. Another time, a long term train user forgot to buy their ticket at departure, approached the inspector at the destination turnstiles and asked could they exit and buy their weekly pass to cover their journey. They were refused and fined. This is not acceptable, there has to be some leeway. They are known in our area as the Train Nazis, as they keep saying that they are "just following orders" and have never let anyone go with a warning, even when they are clearly distressed, repentive and trying to be honest.

We agree that more money is needed to improve the rail system, for the above reasons, and more. What we disagree with is the fact that the passengers must cover these costs. City Rail propaganda is flung at us daily, but those of us who actually use the system know that contrary to what we are told, times are NOT changing.

Regular rail users should be rewarded by persevering with City Rail and under no circumstances should their weekly fares rise. We believe that student prices are fair, although International students attending NSW TAFE and Uni should also be eligible.

Our suggestion to cover these costs is that instead of raising fares, advertising is installed. Sydney buses have ads internally, as do most international city train systems. Not only would it give City Rail some much needed revenue to improve services, the carriages would be more colourful and interesting, and best of all, the passengers would not be penalised.

Originally from overseas, we have had the opportunity commute on rail systems in many cities including San Francisco, Dublin, London, Mexico City and Prague. In some ways Sydney's City Rail is superior to these, but in many areas, it lacks. The one thing that it definitely doesn't need is raised fares.

Thank you for your time,
Marnie Cranwell and Ryan McKnight