

Paul Trevaskis
25/03/2006

Submission to Inquiry into Rail Fares.

To Mr. James P Cox.
Chief Executive Officer
IPART
44 Market Street
Sydney.

Dear Sir

Please find attached copy of submission to the inquiry into rail fares from the Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc. Inc. Also attached is the copy of the Survey of the Community into the timetable as conducted in September / October 2005 immediately after the introduction of the timetable.

Yours faithfully
Paul Trevaskis Hon.Sect.

Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc.Inc.
Ref Submission Rail Fares IPART 06.
Date: 21st March 06

To Mr James Cox.
Chief Executive Officer
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.
44 Market Street
Sydney

Dear Sir.

On behalf of the Members of the Association I thank the Tribunal for the opportunity to submit the following issues and concerns in relation to the fare structure of RailCorp.

After careful considerations of the matters addressed in the submission by RailCorp and the issues as presented to the Executive of the Association. We find we cannot accept the proposal by RailCorp to increase the rail fares on the rail system. We have accepted CPI increases on previous occasions. The following are the reasons and concerns for not accepting increases both the CPI Fares and the reduction in Discount of Off Peak Fares.

Timetable Issues P.M Peak

I have attached a copy of the results of a survey we conducted after the introduction of the timetable in September October Period 2005. The number of replies was 190. The Survey also produced other comments on the on the Rail Service these being in brief:

- Loss of early morning services as indicated in attached Survey
- Extended Journey Time
- Interconnecting services issues
- Overcrowding
- Stopping Patterns
- Preference of the type of seating was overall support for 2 x 2 seating.

There were positive responses namely some interconnecting services were satisfactory and the improved stopping on trains at Penrith: what was of interest the different preferred departure times in the P.M. Peak Periods as indicated in the survey. The Association has confirmed that the issues that were raised in the Survey are still current. The On Time Running has improved but not to the Members aspirations.

The members were not impressed that RailCorp was using a survey taken in September last year by ITSSR in that the sample of the whole Network was 1006 and only 40 persons were interviewed on the Blue Mountains.

Off Peak Services.

The Association cannot accept the proposal to reduce the discounts on the Off Peak Fares

- The major issue is RailCorp does not compile the On Time Running Statistics for the Off Peak Services including Weekends and Holidays

(2)

- There is a major anomaly in the timetable in that the suburban connecting services at Penrith are such that the Suburban Services after 10 A.M. Penrith 7 minutes before the Blue Mountains Services arrives at Penrith Station after the Suburban Service Departs the next Suburban Service departs 23 minutes later.
- The patronage on the Off Peak is quite different to Peak Hours. It must be remembered that the discount fares were to attract users to use the rail system after the peak period
 1. Low Income persons.
 2. Casual Workers.
 3. Attractive for the Casual Users
 4. Back Packers and other Tourists are regular Users.
 5. Families using the system on Weekends and Holidays.
 6. Education
 7. Shopping
 8. Entertainment

Before the Association agrees to any changes the Association will have to statistics on the Off Peak Users as the Government appears to have put the discount on the agenda without warning, also the Association has the opinion that there are other ways to improve income which I will address.

Hidden Losses

The meeting of the Executive has suggested that RailCorp has the opportunity to look at the Hidden Losses of Income that should be addressed

- The consistent Up Grading on weekends has through observations losses of patronage. The Association requests that IPART seek the statistics on the number of persons travelling on normal weekends versus Upgrade Periods.
- Loss of income due to non checking of tickets on boarding of buses during UpGrading period From informed source `A station master announced on a bus " Have you got a ticket - half the bus got off to get a ticket " .
- Recently I have observed that Gates are left open and no one checks the ticket as the people walk through " Observed at Central and Penrith Stations Transit Officers were in the vicinity

Hidden Costs

The Association Members have raised the following issues that have costs to the Government and the Corporation that if reviewed could save millions of dollars:

Leasing of Rolling Stock

- A. The Leasing of the Rolling Stock has incurred costs that consist of loan charges that have been listed in Annual Reports. The Association raised this issue in our 2003 Submission and we question then to cost of \$450 .00 million on the leasing costs for all these years. Will IPART seek what is the initial loan, the interest costs and when will the loan be fully paid?

(3)

Use of Consultants

- B. We note that Consultants are contracted on various projects we do not question the use of Consultants but do we get true value
1. do we get true value?
 2. Is there closure of the service?
 3. Are the Reports available for scrutinising in order for the Community to assess the value of the consultation process?
 4. The Waterfall Inquiry revealed that a consultant reported on the inadequacy of the Foot Pedal on the Tangara “ Nothing was done.
 5. The question that should be asked if we cannot do it in house then why not?
 6. What are criteria for contracting consultants? We acknowledge that there are many aspects of the development that are and do take place with technology improvements but we wonder if the Managers within Railcorp are able to develop and innovate both within the engineering protocols and management structures or has RailCorp lost the expertise to innovate within RailCorp itself without the Consultants ?

Airport Link.

The Association is very perturbed that this Company has been in receivership for some time and that \$800 million has been spent virtually propping up a company for this period with tax payer's money. The access fee/ chargers has not been competitive n

- A. The bus fare to Queen Park Square and Mascot is cheaper.
- B. Lack of concession fares on the Air Port Line
- C. The taxi fares are more competitive than one person travelling and the advantage of accessing both terminals with greater ease as the taxi drops you off at the Terminals virtually at the doors.
- D. The Association believes that the Planning process neglected the social occasions that arrival and departure included family groups wishing Bon Voyage and Welcome Home (Did the planners observe this)
- E. Another hidden factor is the transfer from Suburban Trains at Central is not across platform especially Platforms 16 and 17 also 19 and 18 where the trains cross
- F. The Air Port line is compensated for delays and close down but the rest of the community is not compensated when the rest of the rail service is delayed, cancelled trains, upgrading interruptions etc. Is this discrimination? The Government has covered some of the Risk to the Investment by this compensation The question is Why did this occur in the first place given status of the network at the time of contract was signed?
- G. It is noted that Cab Charge Cards are issued to persons in the Commercial Area. We gather that the employee Company pays for this fare which in the course of business is a tax deduction. Does Airport link have a similar payment system that is a tax deductible?

The Government may look at what Prime Minister Tony Blair did with Railtrack. Yes the Government took back control.

It is noted that in the London Network the Air Port Links that serve other local stations on these lines normal fares are charged. The Association believes that normal Rail Corp fares should apply to Queen Park Square and Mascot including all concessions. The Association raises the question is the fare structure to Queen Park Square and Mascot discriminating against the local communities?

T Card Costs

The T Card Contract is of interest as this project has been in the development stage since 1999. In August 2001 the expected introduction was 2005. The Association is wondering what the total cost that has accrued by the Ministry of Transport and Government Authorities over and above the initial Contract Agreement. The Association members requested I ask the following.

- C. Has IPART any authority to investigate the cost and charges that the T card development has accrued in the last few years or is this a responsibility of the Audit Office?
- D. Also has IPART any jurisdiction on the cost of the T card to the customer and any other charges that may apply peration does not take place? The Members agreed that any extra costs will be part of the ticketing charges.

131500

This issue is one that does need addressing as members have been critical e.g.

- E. The 131500 does not have a good reputation, replies are questionable as far as timely response is concerned.
- F. The Access is not User Friendly, the lengthy procedures to initiate a complaint is off-putting. A direct line for complaints would be preferable for the customer and RailCorp may be able to give an improved service to the customer from the information obtained.
- G. Customers are reluctant to complain.
- H. Members have requested IPART to ascertain if RailCorp monitors the 131500 number to ascertain what service quality is offered to the Community e.g.
 - 1. How many calls are not completed by the callers to this number?
 - 2. The number of calls to each Section e.g. timetables bus train etc
 - 3. The number of calls lost due to delay of the overall service
 - 4. The number of calls to Complaints and each category addressed.
 - 5. The number of calls terminated due to delays on this line.We believe the telephone system should be able to tell what particular extension is called and what numbers are completed. The members indicated that it must be efficient management for this information to be available for staffing purposes of the various Call Centre Cells.

Information.

- The Members have been critical of the inconsistency in announcements on stations and in trains. Clarity, Communications on Public Address System on stations clash with parallel announcement being made about other warnings etc and the arrival or departure announcements not clearly heard.
- Continuous warning announcements become an annoyance, repeated warning notices tend to indicate that the customer is unintelligent and foolish in behaviour Discretion by the station manager should read the people on the station and act accordingly.
- Reliance on the Web Site when many of the community do not have access to the WEB.
- There should be improvement in the use of the local press on Upgrading informing the Public the reasons for and the work that is being carried.
- Members have complained about the badly placed indicators at Central: Strathfield Bondi Junction.

Marketing

This subject is another issue that RailCorp has not been as proactive Members raised the issues.

- Improving marketing of the Blue Mountains as a tourist location we did have a promotion on Central Station Platforms 12 and 13 with motifs etc but these were removed. Endeavouring to find these was unsuccessful.
- Introduce a 3 day pass from Penrith to Lithgow. To promote tourism and improve access to the National Park within the Mountains.
- Members have requested that RailCorp should allow Break of Journey on Single and Return Tickets within the departure and destination station
- Members indicated that there is a need for a weekend ticket that can be used over the weekend. This type of ticket was available some years ago
- Another opportunity that has not been taken up is making interconnections between Central, South Coast and Blue Mountains services efficiently.

Quality of Service Provisions

The Association believes that RailCorp should consider a different approach that reflects good governance by a proactive approach by improving the overall quality performance of the Rail System.

The Association Members believes that the Rail System must have the mechanisms/tools of management that ensures the quality of service delivered is in accordance with Standards and Procedures that meets the Customer Expectations on a 24 Hour Basis, not treating the Off Peak as a subset.

The customers using the Off Peak have just as important use of the system as the peak hour customer and the present approach is boarding on discrimination

Quality of Service Provision contd.

The multiplicity of reasons for the Off Peak journey Medical, Education Social .Entertainment etc. this not denying that Peak Hour Travellers have similar needs thus attention to Off Peak services require the same quality of service. Reducing services to service the Peak is questionable.

The Association has the always believed that Unreliability and Inconsistency of the Infrastructure of the Rail System is due to a System that does not appear to have Quality Assurance or Total Quality Control Systems that would meet ASO 9000 Series or Australian Standards. The Association has the opinion that there should be an Independent Quality Audit Team within RailCorp that reports to a Senior Authority on the Board .

The Association Members believe that the following list of issues reflect lack of management procedures

- The Corrosion problems on the Intercity is an extreme example of incompetence as the reason for the deterioration is based on well known problems with the type of structure used on the Intercity Services
- The XPT bogie problem is another issue, fortunately it was caught in time but we wonder what examinations were used on rolling stock as we find that RailCorp is Outsourcing the maintenance of the bogies. Has RailCorp lost all of its technical expertise even if it is outsourced there should be back up Testing Laboratory to confirm basic Materials Testing. (Please see attached letter re a journey during removal of XPT services.)
- The Association has a concern wherein that upgrading of the signalling has supposed to be on going and wonder why there are failures of signals. What is the quality of workmanship and maintenance.
- Air conditioning, Toilets Issues and Door Operation on the Intercity carriages are an issue.

Restructure of RailCorp

The Association has been informed of the Station Operations Reform process and on the information presented to the Association has been accepted as a positive approach at the stage; however we feel that the RailCorp should bring the overall Restructure of RailCorp to a conclusion. The Association has observed that RailCorp appears to be in the constant state of restructure. The service still has a repetitive nature of incidents as feedback from members indicates. The Association urges that RailCorp should finalise the Restructure Process in order to establish a foundation for the future. The Clearways are a positive approach but the Clearways will not be a success if the infrastructure fails to deliver quality of service.

Upgrading Issues.

The Association believes that the progress of the Upgrading Process should be well documented as it is a constant source of annoyance - ultimate finalisation should be known. It is timely for the Government should produce a full audit of the upgrading.

(6).

Current Issues the Association Members have raised with the Executive.

- Many customers use the system to shuttle from North Sydney to the Sydney CBD. Criticism of this is during the off peak day services.
- Members have advised the Executive that there are problems with the Rail System that are still occurring these being
 1. Signal failures.
 2. Lack of drivers or guards.
 3. A delay at Central on 6.10 P.M. Service.
 4. Delays occurring on Off Peak service at Redfern waiting for platform access at Central through the Sydney Yard.
- The Association receives feedback on the services provided by buses during Upgrading. Lack of Sufficient buses on Night Services also lengthen journey times when there are more than one Sector is disrupted for maintenance or Upgrading.

The major issue of the Community are:

- Timetable Changes as listed in the survey.
- A break in service between 2.11 P.M and 4.21 P.M. between Katoomba and Blackheath.
- The loss of the early morning 1.32 A.M ex Central to Springwood and the return service to Central. We have requested an extension of the Nightrider service from Penrith with no out come as yet .
- We have suggested a couple of proposals to over come the stopping pattern issue of the 5.09 P.M. service.
- We have suggested a proposal to overcome a crowding problem on 4.23 P.M service and remove a "U" stop problem

Ever since the September Timetable was introduced the Executive has spent a great amount of our time endeavouring to overcome the criticisms of the timetable seemingly without success, hence the reluctance to accept increases in fares at this stage.

I would be more comfortable if we were able to devote more time for the preparation for this submission to the Inquiry, with only a month virtually to prepare a satisfactory document is very disappointing. There may be other issues that we wish to raise after we have more time to study the submission by RailCorp and other submissions as they are published on the Web Site. RailCorp has to develop greater consistency in service and reliability.

I submit this document on behalf of the Association for careful consideration when determining the fares of RailCorp.

Yours faithfully

Paul Trevaskis

Hon Sect.

Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc.Inc.

Ref. Survey Results Prelim.1

Date: 7th Nov.05

Preliminary Results of Survey 05

The following preliminary report of the Survey are recorded. The results to questions are as follows. 190 survey forms were returned.

Do you support stopping of The Fish at Penrith & Emu Plains.

Yes 17.3% No 68.6% No comment 4.6%

Do you support The Chips to stop at Penrith

Yes 14% No 68% No comment 10.66%

Is the connection you make if any satisfactory

Yes 24.6% No 25% No comment 48% No answer 10%

Restore the 8.45 A.M service ex Springwood

Yes 33.3% No 11.3% No comment 49.33%

Restore the 1.32 A.M Central to Springwood (naturally the return service would be returned)

Yes 48.66% No 10.66% No comment 34.66%

Restore 5.09 ex Central to stop at Medlow Bath and Blackheath.

Yes 66% No 4.6% No comment 31.33%

All Blue Mountains stations were represented in the departure station and the various times from 5.00 A.M to 9.00 A.M. The evening departure times was of interest as the times of departure were various in the time frames 3.30 P.M to 4.32 P.M:- 4.23 P.M to 4.53 P.M. 4.53 P.M.- 5.09 P.M.: 5.09 P.M - 6.10 and 6.10-7.00 P.M.

The station departure	Ex Central	83.	Ex Penrith	4
	Ex Parramatta	26.	Ex Strathfield	7
	Ex Balcktown	5.	Ex Redfern	3

From Westmead, 2,Granville 2 Liverpool 1.

The survey forms had comments that covered commonalities such as interconnecting services, fast services and extended journey, stopping at Penrith and Emu Plains, overcrowding e.g 4.23 P.M.

The question on 2 x 2 seating result was overwhelming in support of the comfort of the vsets The preference for 2 x 2 seating was 61.66%, 50% split with 2 x 2 and 2x 3 was 16.66% and 13% no comment on seating. 21.6% raised comments on luggage space with the preference for v set type seating for comfort, leg room and ride comfort .

Paul Trevaskis Hon .Sect