

Commuter Council <commuters@bigpond.com>
30/3/2006

TO IPART
RE REVIEW OF RAIL PUBLIC TRANSPORT Fares 2006

On 14/3/2006, the Commuter Council met and discussed a submission to IPART.
Please find below a copy of the outcome of that meeting.

2006 SUBMISSION FROM COMMUTER COUNCIL TO IPART

The Commuter Council again expresses its gratitude for being afforded the opportunity to make this submission in the interests of the needs and wishes of NSW commuters. The Commuter Council also requests the opportunity of speaking at the public discussion session.

The Commuter Council was established by arrangement with the NSW Government, around 1971. The Commuter Council comprises representatives from the various Commuter Associations that exist throughout the greater Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong areas.

Up till the present the council has not objected to fare increases in line with national CPI increases. The council has expressed concern when increases beyond the national CPI have been introduced. The council is of the opinion that rail management has a responsibility to develop and implement productivity increases that should in the longer term enable actual decreases in fares.

The council is concerned at the reduction of relative market share of public transport, due to a number of factors including the increase in the relative cost of public transport fares against the perceived cost of motor car use.

Previously, service levels provided to commuters does not seem to have been a factor in fare increases, although service levels seem to have been the main reason for no rail fare increases over the last 2 years.

If service levels do become a factor in fare rises, a number of matters should be considered. Travel speeds are a major factor with commuters and the slowing of trains in recent timetables is seen as a major decrease in service levels, particularly in outer and intercity areas. It is suggested that fare levels should be directly proportional to travel times. This will create an incentive for management to speedup services. It will also serve to attract motor car users back to public transport. The profitability of public transport operation would improve substantially due to increased custom, higher fares etc.

Punctuality, and reliability are also essential elements of good railway service but how to allow for this is uncertain.

The Commuter Council submits that management and staff pay should be determined by actual service levels being provided to the travelling public.

So far as the proposal to reduce off peak discounts, this is considered to be counterproductive as it will reduce the incentive for people to travel outside the crowded peak period. It is considered that one way off peak tickets should be introduced as another way of encouraging commuters to use off peak.