

SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL OF NEW SOUTH WALES

CITYRAIL FARE REVIEW

MARCH 2006

I make this submission to IPART's CityRail fare review as a private citizen. My views relate solely to my experience as a CityRail daily commuter to the city. Since 2002, I have lived in Carramar, Auburn and Fairfield, and therefore have utilised the South Line (Campbelltown via Granville) daily. (Prior to 2002, I commuted daily on the Northern Line.)

My experiences have been negative and therefore it is common for me to arrive late at my place of employment. I have been quite fortunate that I am a public servant and allowed some flexibility in the time I commence work. However, I am certain that had I been a private enterprise employee, I would have been sacked due to my punctuality as a result of the trains.

I can guarantee that CityRail will be permitted to raise its fares no matter how many submissions are made to the contrary, and I am aware that I am probably wasting my time with this submission. However, this is one way for me to vent my spleen and make you aware how pissed off commuters are with CityRail's service and punctuality. A price increase to fares is unacceptable until service and punctuality are improved to standards acceptable by commuters **NOT** by government officials conducting non-existing surveys.

SERVICE RELIABILITY

On Monday to Fridays, I catch either the 7:53am or 8:10am from Fairfield, which should arrive at Town Hall at 8:39am and 8:56am respectively. On my return journey, I catch either the 4:30pm, 5:00pm or 5:15pm from St James, and they should arrive at Fairfield at 5:22pm, 5:53pm and 6:15pm respectively. The reason I catch the train at St James and not Town Hall on my return journey is because I am guaranteed a seat, even though my journey increases by 10 minutes.

In the last four weeks, I have kept a daily record of my journey. Table 1 states the daily problems encountered on the forward journey to the city. Table 2 states the daily problems encountered on the return journey to Fairfield.

Table 1: Fairfield to the City

DATE	TRAIN FROM FAIRFIELD	COMMENTS
23 Feb 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Reduced to 6 carriages instead of 8. Train was full. Commuters were standing from Fairfield.
24 Feb 2006	7:53am	Train arrived at Town Hall at 8:55am.
27 Feb 2006	7:53am	Not air-conditioned.
28 Feb 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
1 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
2 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Stopped at every signal between Petersham station and Redfern. Arrived late.
3 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
6 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Stopped for 15 minutes at Yennora. No information relayed to commuters as to delay.
7 Mar 2006	7:53am	Not air-conditioned. Stopped at every signal between Petersham station and Redfern. Arrived very late.
8 Mar 2006	7:53am	Not air-conditioned.
9 Mar 2006	8:10am	Air-conditioned. Arrived on time at Town Hall.¹
10 Mar 2006	9:10am	Not air-conditioned. Train was full. Commuters were standing from Fairfield.
13 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
14 Mar 2006	8:10am	Previous train (7:58am) was cancelled, even though a train went through Fairfield at 8:05am and did not stop (probably the late running 7:58am). As a result the 8:10am was full and commuters were standing from Fairfield. Not air-conditioned.
15 Mar 2006	7:53am	Not air-conditioned. Train stopped at every signal from Petersham to Central for lengthy periods. Arrived at Central at 9:00am instead of 8:36am. At Central went to Platform 22/23 to catch a train to St James. The platform was total mayhem. The first train that pulled in was on platform 22. Had to wait 10 minutes before the conductor advised that the delay was caused by an absent driver. As another train pulled in on platform 23, most commuters disembarked the train on platform 22 and boarded the train on platform 23. Not one word was relayed to commuters by station staff as to which train would depart first. When it was realised that the train on platform 22 would depart first, commuters disembarked and boarded the train on platform 22 again. Arrived very late.
16 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
17 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Arrived Town Hall after 9:05am.
20 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned.
21 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Very slow between Lidcombe and Strathfield
22 Mar 2006	8:10am	Not air-conditioned. Arrived Town Hall after 9:05am.

¹ This was the only day the train arrived at Town Hall as per the specified time in the timetable. All other days the train has been **at least** 5 minutes late, and sometimes up to 15 minutes late.

It must be noted that everyday, except for 9 March, the train continually stopped regularly at a red light signal. This usually occurred between Lidcombe and Strathfield, and Stanmore and Redfern. I presume this is a result of a slow or late running all stations train preceding my train, resulting in my train arriving at a later time than specified in the timetable. Furthermore, from Strathfield, a lack of seats is a regular occurrence forcing commuters to stand.

Table 2: City to Fairfield

DATE	TRAIN FROM ST JAMES	COMMENTS
23 Feb 2006	6:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Train consisted of 6 carriages. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
24 Feb 2006	4:30pm	
27 Feb 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Very slow between Newtown and Petersham, and Strathfield and Lidcombe. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
28 Feb 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
1 Mar 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Arrived Fairfield after 6:00pm. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
2 Mar 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
3 Mar 2006	4:30pm	
6 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
7 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Continual stopping throughout journey as preceding trains were running late. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
8 Mar 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
9 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
10 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
13 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
14 Mar 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned. Train was full and people were standing from Town Hall.
15 Mar 2006	4:30pm	
16 Mar 2006	5:00pm	Not air-conditioned.
17 Mar 2006	5:15pm	
20 Mar 2006	4:30pm	
21 Mar 2006	5:15pm	Trains were running late and out of timetable order and as a result this train arrived at St James at 5:30pm.
22 Mar 2006	5:15pm	

The return journey to Fairfield is not as slow as the forward journey. However, trains always slow down or stop between Newtown and Petersham, and Strathfield and Lidcombe, resulting in the train arriving late at its destination. The 5:00pm train is an express train that does not stop at Lidcombe, however, it always stops at the signals prior to Lidcombe for a couple of minutes defeating its purpose of being an express train. Furthermore, from Wynyard or Town Hall, a lack of seats is a regular occurrence forcing commuters to stand.

STAFF

CityRail Staff are very unhelpful when there are delays. Commuters are usually left in the dark and not relayed any information. I am sure this probably is not the fault of staff and some changes could be made by management to ensure commuters are advised of any delays or problems on the CityRail network.

FLEET UPGRADING

This summer has been one of the most frustrating in relation to CityRail services, in particular in the afternoons on the return journey to Fairfield. The 5:00pm from St James is an express train to Campbelltown, making it the most crowded in peak hour. I am astounded that priority has not been given to this service in the provision of a Tangara or Millennium train. As a result, on hot days, I intentionally avoid the 5:00pm from St James and wait for the 5:15pm which is guaranteed to be air-conditioned (usually a Millennium train).

TRANSIT OFFICERS

I do not recall seeing one transit officer in the mornings for the past year. They would be a welcome sight, in particular when school children are occupying seats whilst adults are standing.

OFF PEAK FARE STRUCTURE

Due to the overcrowding of trains during peak hour, a suggestion would be to restrict the sale of pensioner concessions to after 9:00am.

CONCLUSION

I have demonstrated CityRail's shortcomings that cause daily frustrations for commuters in my tables on page 2 and 3. This is only a 4 week snapshot of the Southern Line via Granville. I am aware of daily problems on other CityRail lines as they are sometimes highlighted in the media and through word of mouth by other commuters.

A train is punctual only when it arrives at its destination at the time specified in the CityRail timetable. CityRail's definition of punctuality, i.e. the train arriving at its destination within 5 minutes of the time specified in CityRail timetables, is not acceptable, as it does not taken into account trains that 'skip' stations to make up time, which is intensely frustrating for commuters.

A price increase to fares is therefore unacceptable until service and punctuality are improved to standards acceptable by commuters **NOT** by CityRail.

ADRIANA BORDER