

Katherine Lane
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Review of fares for cityrail in 2006

My submission in relation to the proposed fare increases appears below:

I am a regular user of cityrail services. I have been travelling on cityrail trains for the past 16 years to get to work each day.

The past 3 years have seen what I consider to be the worst service by cityrail. Unfortunately a timetable change has not improved services. In fact, train services are now much slower and the timetabling makes less sense.

I wish to address a number of the claims made in the cityrail submission:

1) If cityrail has introduced a KPI efficiency framework it has not been evidenced in outcomes. I have observed the following:

- a) Trains have been slower since the introduction of the new timetable. My average train trip is now 7 minutes longer.
- b) Cityrail regularly has insufficient carriages on my line (the north shore line) leading to crowding
- c) Cityrail still regularly cancels off peak trains

There is also little meaningful comparison between cityrail service and international service. Certainly my overseas experience is that overseas train networks are on the whole more efficient than cityrail.

Cityrail may have implemented a process to achieve efficiency gains, Consistent with the Parry Report's recommendations but have they achieved those efficiency gains??

Even if CPI has risen this does not mean cityrail should be rewarded with a fare increase when it has still yet to demonstrate real improvements in service.

CityRail states its fares are charged at a discount to alternative public and private car transport. Due to economies of scale public transport should always be cheaper and this argument does not take this into account.

- CityRail states its fares are currently at the lower end of comparative international rates. However, this does not make an adjustment for service comparisons.
- Cityrail states that studies have shown that the impact of fare changes on typical CityRail passengers (predominantly professional or white collar workers travelling to and from their CBD workplace) only results in a relatively small drop-off in patronage (i.e. an inelastic response to fare changes). As a matter of public policy this is a very disturbing statement. The people of NSW should be encouraged to use the train network not be discouraged. I also must challenge the white collar worker contention. Although most of the users of trains are office workers they are usually not professionals. It is a big leap of logic to assume they are well paid.

There are a lot of part time workers on the train (particularly women) who are not necessarily very well paid.

In summary, a fare increase is not justified based on cityrail's submission.

Comments on the changes to off peak fares:

For the past 3 years, I have also been a regular user of off peak services. I decided to make the change for a number of reasons:

- 1) the fare discount
- 2) to relieve congestion during peak hour

I did work out that I could buy a yearly ticket and get the same sort of deal as off peak usage. However, I decided on off peak because peak hour trains are horrendously crowded.

I strenuously object to changes in the off peak fare structure.

Off peak trains are:

- 1) slower - they are usually all stations
- 2) you have to buy a ticket each time the train is used. This means trains are often missed waiting in ticket queues.
- 3) off peak users relieve congestion on peak hours
- 4) off peak users usually go home later and so do not travel in afternoon peak
- 5) off peak users are generally in lower paid jobs making it more difficult to afford fare increases.

Any change to the off peak fare structure will only put more pressure on peak hour trains causing more dissatisfaction with city rail. Cityrail has provided NO EVIDENCE that it can sustain a significantly greater amount of people during peak hour. It also has not done any study on the effect any changes to the off peak structure would have on overall use of peak hour trains.

I believe that there are a lot of people who use off peak deliberately and will be influenced to go back to peak if the price becomes uncompetitive. I am one of those people.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Lane