

L. G. Wilson
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Objection to Increases in Rail Fares

I strongly object to increases in rail fares. Since Labor first came to power in NSW following the Greiner/Fahey terms, my weekly ticket has increased by 78.5%. I live in Artarmon and commute to the city each weekday. In the year where RailCorp/City Rail were allowed to increase fares by 14%, my weekly fare actually increased just short of 20%. My son, who lives in St Leonards and works in North Sydney, had his weekly ticket increase by 22%. That increase was extremely costly for commuters.

Our train service is not worth any increase at all. The service is extremely poor and unreliable. The new timetable has done nothing to alleviate any frustration the ordinary commuter experiences each day. Over the years, each time we've had an increase in rail fares, we've been told the increases were for improvements in the service, yet commuters are still to see any improvements. They are non-existent. Our trains on the North Shore line have become more overcrowded each year. Since the increase in fuel prices, the overcrowding has become worse. Trains are so full that people are almost bursting out the doors. In the morning, we are often told by station staff not to board a train because of overcrowding, yet the next train is no better. Quite often, one has to wait for three trains to go past before managing to finally board a train. I have been late for work so often and have to always make the same old excuse when I get to work. I have even left home much earlier in the hope of getting to work on time, only to be frustrated because in the end I still arrive at work late because of not being able to board overcrowded trains.

Why is it that the commuter has to always pay for our State government not being able to do the right thing? There are rail networks all over the world with much better services than the one we have and not expensive like ours, nor with filthy trains like we have to put up with. It seems to me that RailCorp/City Rail is just not up to it in supervising staff with cleaning and maintaining trains. Obviously supervisors are not doing their job.

Some weeks ago, on my way home one evening, I was standing next to a woman from England. She was staying here for a few days before going down to Melbourne for the Commonwealth Games. She said she found it hard to comprehend that we had to pay anything at all to travel on our trains, the service is so poor. She also had a gripe about our transit officers. She was staying in Hornsby and she said that she bought a return ticket to the City one morning. She had no problem going in to the City, but when she wanted to return to Hornsby later in the day, she didn't know what platform she needed to catch her train from and asked a City Rail employee for directions to the correct platform. Needless to say, she was directed to the wrong platform. There is a train to Hornsby from that platform, but it goes through Strathfield and then on to Epping and finally Hornsby. When she alighted at Hornsby, she was stopped by a transit officer at the exit who told her she did not have a valid ticket for that train. He accused her of evading the fare. She said the man was very rude and then another transit officer joined them and was equally as rude. She said she was made to feel like a terrible criminal. She was given an infringement notice, even though she explained that she had been told by City Rail staff to catch that train. She said that the next time she comes to Australia, she will avoid Sydney altogether and intends telling all her friends back home about her experience and will advise them to not come to Sydney.

Mr Watkins thinks he has overseen an improvement in the rail service. He is completely wrong and arrogant in thinking that. Commuters are sick and tired of the sloppy service and are extremely angry at the thought of yet another increase in fares.

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