

Luke Thistlethwaite

28th March 2006

Submission re CityRail Fare Review 2006

CityRail's service is so poor it does not warrant fare increases. If CityRail's metrics suggest otherwise then they are inaccurate measures. For example a decrease in complaints to CityRail probably indicates customer resignation, not satisfaction.

The following issues need addressing before CityRail can justify fair increases

· Overcrowding

Trains and stations are overcrowded during peak hours. Overcrowding on trains is getting worse month by month. It is a serious problem for elderly or infirm passengers, or those who are accompanying children.

· Service Frequency

Services were infrequent before the latest timetable changes. The timetable changes last year have decreased frequencies and increased journey times.

· Information

Information systems are atrocious. Indicator signs in stations are inaccurate. The 131500 phone number does not give timely and accurate information when service disruptions occur. Lack of information when services are disrupted for engineering works (e.g. in the evening when trains do not run from Wynyard or Town Hall, but start, unannounced, from Central) put Sydney's rail systems squarely in third-world territory.

· Poor Access

Entrances to (and exits from) CBD stations both via ticket barriers and concourses are inadequate, and well below world standards.

· Ventilation

Air conditioning is a rarity. Many train carriages have sealed windows, which is bad news in summer when there is no air-conditioning. Platforms on stations such as Wynyard and Town Hall become unacceptably hot in summer due to inadequate ventilation.

· Transport Integration

Integration of rail with other transport seems non-existent. E.g. there is no provision for cyclists on peak-hour services. Little effort is made to integrate fast and slow train services for the inter-changing passenger's benefit.

· Ticket Integration

Integrated tickets (train, tram, bus, ferry) are still not available.

· Coverage

The rail system has not been expanded to new (or even old) suburbs.

· Cleanliness

Graffiti-ed seats are common, causing problems for clothes and making

public transport feel like a poor man's ghetto.

- Staff Thuggery

Uniformed thugs harass passengers, e.g ordering you not to sit on the steps even when no seats are available. Whatever happened to genial ticket inspectors?

- Ticketing

Queues for tickets are routinely unacceptably long due to staff shortages and broken machines.

- Station Seats

Seats at stations are insufficient. They are important given the infrequent services.

To be fair many or all of these issues are down to the state government, not the rail organisations, but till they are resolved fare increases are not merited.

Yours faithfully

Luke Thistlethwaite