

Mark Novosel

Please find attached my submission outlining why I am opposing RailCorp's proposed fare increase.

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Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW in Regards to RailCorp Fare Increases

1.1.1 Introduction

I would like to outline my reasons why I believe a fare increase is not justified with the current level of service being offered to CityRail commuters by RailCorp.

Firstly, I have been a regular commuter for the past 4 years going from Eastwood to the City for uni and more recently for work, not to mention on occasions when going out in the city as well.

1.1.2 Timetable

Prior to the introduction of the 'New' timetable on 4 September 2005, I had 4 trains that I could catch to get to the city by 9:00am, these being: 8:06, 8:10, 8:14, 8:24am; 4 trains over a period of 18 minutes, which means that if I missed one I would have a very good chance of making it onto another.

Following the new timetable, I now have a choice of 3 trains, being: 8:08, 8:12, 8:13; a total of 3 trains within ONLY 5 MINUTES! So when I miss one, I usually miss them all and have to catch the 8:27, which gets me to work around 9:15!

This is absolutely appalling; this timetable has been thrown together as a 'quick fix' to the congestion and on-time running problems that RailCorp has been facing for a number of years now.

Furthermore, what also really annoys me about the lack of thought put into the timetable is in relation to off-peak services. I can fully understand why trains must be allocated more stopping time at stations to avoid running late and enhance passenger safety, however according to the timetable, it takes a train the same amount of time to travel during the morning peak, afternoon peak, 10pm at night and any other time of the day! How can this be?

This is ridiculous to a point where late night trains are often crawling in order to avoid arriving too early, and if they do they wait for up to 5 minutes at Strathfield before continuing, something that I find terribly frustrating when trying to get home ASAP at night.

1.1.3 Over-Crowding

There is little wonder why commuters regularly express their anger in *MX* which I read on the evening train home about feeling like 'sardines in a can'. When you have a timetable that has cut services, drawn out travel times and compressed the number of trains commuters can take in the morning of course there is terrible overcrowding which was not present before.

On my line, in the past month I have had no less than 4 occasions where I've caught one of my three trains that has been so packed that the doors could barely close, in 1 case I had to balance on one foot until Strathfield, sure I could have waited and taken the next train, and then be late for work! This level of service is what you would expect in a third world country, not a developed nation like Australia. How can RailCorp ask for a fare increase when they continually keep failing to meet commuters' basic expectations!

What makes over-crowding even worse is that some days we are given a 6 car train instead of the usual 8 car train which causes chaos at Eastwood station, I can only pity those that need to get on further towards the city, they have no chance!

1.1.4 Transit Officers

I fully support the need for a security on trains, however I feel that transit officers serve only one purpose and that is to issue infringements to commuters. They are not allowed to intervene if they witness a crime being committed, they cannot arrest those that commit the crimes and are specifically instructed to 'back off'. This doesn't make me feel very safe on a train, knowing that if someone is going to commit a crime, a transit officer will have to walk away and radio for police while they offender most likely by such time will have fled the scene.

I have also on numerous occasions witnessed transit officers on trains bullying commuters that for genuine reasons did not have a ticket, such as one instance where a man had been buying weekly tickets for the past year as he claimed and had simply forgotten in a hurry that day to buy a new ticket, an easy honest mistake. Upon showing the officers past tickets from his wallet which they totally ignored, he was issued with a fine. I felt like intervening but for fear of being fined myself could only sit there in furious silence.

On another serious note, during my 4 years at Sydney University, I caught the train to Redfern every day and without fail there were at least 2-4 transit officers at the ticket gates every day, doing absolutely nothing! They were either talking amongst themselves or on their mobile phones making personal calls which was quite obvious from what I'd overheard. Only on a handful of occasions was I asked to produce my concession card, other times it was as though they weren't even there, wasting our (tax-payers') money. If RailCorp stopped wasting out money on these revenue raisers and put this money towards improving trains the network would be a better one for us all.

1.1.5 Air Conditioning

I really don't know what is worse; trains that do or don't have air conditioning. The ones that do are often cold to the point that people are shivering. I have caught numerous colds from travelling on trains that are far too cold, having come in from the heat outside and then going back to it after. This is unhealthy, why cannot CityRail set the air conditioning to a comfortable level?

1.1.6 Track Work

I cannot understand how virtually every weekend trains are disrupted or cancelled altogether because of track work. Why can't RailCorp simply shutdown the network for one week per year and avoid this continued annoyance that we have to put up with almost every weekend.

Does RailCorp not think anyone uses public transport on weekends?

1.1.7 Stations

Firstly, I am angered by the fact that many stations have no rubbish bins. Instead of giving us somewhere to put our rubbish, RailCorp wastes money on producing posters that tell us how much we can get fined for littering! Bins are essential for stations and perhaps if they were at

each station then our trains and stations wouldn't look as disgusting as they do at the end of each day and maybe there wouldn't be so many rats running around the tracks as can often be seen.

Secondly, stations do not have adequate seating. Since we are almost guaranteed to have to stand once on the train, there should be more seats available on stations, it would make the experience a little better for us all.

Thirdly, Eastwood station (and I'm sure many others too) desperately needs more shelter. When it rains the small amount of sheltered space available becomes awfully crowded and uncomfortable.

Finally, I am sick to death of people smoking on stations and in underground tunnels. Why are Transit Officers not fining people for smoking rather than those who for a genuine reason do not have a ticket?

I don't want to be breathing in toxic smoke from some thoughtless person who needs to get their nicotine fix, so why can't RailCorp start cracking down on smokers, I guarantee that they would make as much if not more than they currently do with their blitz on tickets. ***This is a serious health concern and should be addressed as a priority.***

1.1.8 Conclusion

As you can see from my points above, I strongly oppose RailCorp's decision to increase fares while the service they provide is sub-standard. RailCorp's solution to late trains was to slow them down; this has simply angered commuters even more, making us late for work, university and our other commitments. It now takes about 8 minutes longer to get from Eastwood to Town Hall, a total trip time of 38 minutes, which is a long time to spend on a train. Therefore during a working week I spend over one quarter of a day on trains, most of the time standing too! For the level of service we are experiencing I believe we are already paying too much. Until services are improved, please do not allow RailCorp to increase fares.

Kind Regards,

Mark Novosel