

**Soraya Kassim**  
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NSW RAIL FARES SUBMISSION - final

Dear Sir/Madam

Your submission process was drawn to my attention only 10 minutes ago, and so I apologise for not being able to make a lengthy submission as I only have my lunchbreak in which to do so. I take this opportunity therefore :

- 1) to make brief general comments and a couple of specific suggestions
- 2) to ask you how many submissions you have received from residents of south western and far western Sydney. If you have received less than the proportional number (ie the population of Western Sydney as a proportion of residents of Sydney), and/or less than a statistically valid number of responses, then I suggest that you extend the consultation period and utilise local councils and local community organisations to publicise your process and ensure a real solicitation of views of the travelling and potentially-travelling public. I would be grateful for your specific response to me on this question.

Further to 1) above, comments in brief follow.

1) I note that public transport is a core determinant of social equity and a major influence on poverty, and access to employment, education and social and recreational opportunities. The research into the need to reduce social isolation and increase community participation in order to address growing mental and physical health problems is extensive. This is in addition to other research regarding the cost benefit of public transport over private transport due to issues such as pollution, traffic accidents/hospitalisation/death, time saved through congestion reduction and a reduction in the need to continually build more roads. I suggest, if you have not already done so, that you investigate this.

2) Western Sydney (by which in particular I refer to south western, far western and northwestern) is particularly poorly served by public transport. Travel to work data will substantiate this, including data indicating the number of cars per household that families are forced to invest in despite relatively low income levels. Further anecdotal data from community services regarding the problems they have organising community activities and training courses without access to community transport will also substantiate this.

3) A wholistic approach to addressing transport is required and any attempt to look solely at price without the overall context is flawed. In particular, where Sydney residents are already suffering one form of transport stress (eg extreme inconvenience due to lack of transport connectivity or availability) they could be given an additional incentive to utilise public transport by being provided additional price concessions. Certainly they should not suffer further disadvantage and stress through excessively high fare costs (as at present). Points (4) and (5) below summarise some of the other issues which need to be taken into consideration.

4) The difficulties in Western Sydney relate to :

- An absolute lack of services - in particular the lack of rail access for north western sydney, and for much of south western sydney
- Relative infrequency of service - eg. to the Blue Mountains, Richmond and Villawood
- Lack of connectivity between services - eg. lack of connection between the Tway and Canley Vale Station or other local rail stations ; lack of timetable coordination between private bus services and rail services
- The very high cost of public transport - particularly related to :
  - \*the non-inclusion of private bus fares and Tway fares in weekly train-bus-ferry passes
  - \*the very high cost of fares, especially on the Tway, but also on buses and trains
  - \*the lack of access to concessional "passes" for regular intra-regional transport - ie there is an assumption that everyone wants to go into the city. This creates an inbuilt bias against local community development. Many people may, for example, make regular trips to their local shops, to their local community centre for activities, to their local swimming pool or sports ground, to their local TAFE, or to work a few suburbs away. A subsidised regional travel pass covering all forms of transport (rail, bus, ferry- where appropriate only, and Tway) would be a very useful innovation.

5) There are classes of people who are numerous in Western Sydney (although they are also found in other parts of Sydney) who have particular affordability issues which need to be taken into consideration and who are currently not catered for with the transport concessions because they are not in receipt of federal government social security benefits

- many of these include the poorest of NSW residents - eg. asylum seekers on temporary protection visas and Bridging Visa Es - as they have no rights to work nor any rights to federal government funding assistance and so exist solely on charity. Note that these people also do not have health care cards or even medicare cards. The suggestion is that they specifically be given the right to apply for travel concession cards or, better still, to the equivalent services for seniors.
- students who are attempting to survive on part time work
- low income earners who are struggling with housing stress (more than 30% of their income spent on housing) and certainly don't also need to struggle with transport stress. The specific suggestion here is that concession cards be available to people on the basis of their tax returns - not on the basis of being in receipt of social security or holding a health care card.

6) There should be a review of the policies regarding return fares in order to:

- provide a further price incentive to purchase return fares (which would save time at ticket counters and admin time and ticket inspector salaries following up fare evasion)
- recognise that many people stay overnight in places a long way from the centre of the city (eg. to the Blue Mountains) due to lack of late night services or concerns about safety of late night services. In these cases, a return fare should cover the following morning.

7) The Government should institute a policy of buying back public control over all public transport in order to be able to provide a proper integrated and well priced system. The debacle of the airport

line is a strong case in point. The public subsidies to this system have already been excessive for the public benefit achieved. If any further public concessions are made in the context of a re-sale it will be a further scandal. There are other far more efficient examples of airport services - for example, I commend the service in Kuala Lumpur, which provides that passengers can check in their luggage at the equivalent of Central Station, and then catch a guaranteed 28minute non-stop trip by fast train into the airport (which is a long distance from the centre of the city) to minimise time wasted at airports. In this case the relatively high price they charge (which is approximately that charged on Sydney's airport line) is justified mainly by the extension of airport services and the absolute reliability of the system. Neither of these qualities exist for our airport line.

Grateful if you could place this entire submission - including my opening comments - onto your website.

Thank you.

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