Subject: CityRail Fare Increase/Review of CityRail Fares

To: The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
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Even though this e-mail will reach you after the closing date for submissions about the CityRail fare increase, I would like you to consider it for any other reviews you are undertaking to examine CityRail operations and costs.

I am disappointed that CityRail does not clearly state how much it spends on managing its "farebox". Fares give it some 25% of its revenue, but how much of this is spent on collecting it and protecting it? With this information a decision could be made whether CityRail should give up the portion of revenue derived from fares and the New South Wales government should fund commuter and passenger rail services from the public purse. As it stands, the government and CityRail have both forgotten that there is such a thing as the public good and that services can be funded solely from the taxes paid by citizens for this purpose.

As far as improvements to services are concerned, CityRail appears to believe that the metrics it provides in its submission are evidence that it is providing the highest standard of service possible within the constraints of its funding. This argument, however, hides the fact that any service failure has a major impact on its customers. Even one late train has a wide-ranging impact. Thus when the 7:25 PM service from Liverpool to Minto was 12 minutes late on 1 August 2007, this meant that the connection with the 7:46 PM bus service would not occur. Arriving at Minto at 7:58 PM, those passengers depending on this example of public transport integration were faced with either a taxi fare or a walk home. (In my case, the walk has half and hour in lieu of a $7.00 plus taxi fare. Taxis form Minto are rare at the best of times!) All the passengers on the late running service were affected - very few in any good way. CityRail, of course, would not have noticed this because all its performance indicators are being met.

In relation to this example, I would like to make an additional point.
CityRail has a very aggressive policy of revenue protection. Its private police force issues fines left, right and centre for the slightest infringement. It is committed to imposing sanctions where its customers do not meet their obligations. Yet it is not willing to accept such a policy applied to its own operations. When a train is late there are no sanctions levied on CityRail. This is unfair.

CityRail is in the invidious position of being able to determine what it will consider good performance. It then seeks to increase its revenues because it meets or exceeds these standards. It places itself in a position where its own success is inevitable and any failures are those of customers and its workers.

I would ask IPART to carry out its own review of CityRail. IPART should get out and meet CityRail's customers and ask them about any proposed changes to CityRail's fares or any other aspects of its operations. Having done this it would be best placed to rule fairly on what CityRail deserves in terms of funding and other support to carry out its business.

Once again, I apologise fro sending this submission in after the closing date for the CityRail fare increase. Please fell free to contact me if you require further information or clarification of this e-mail.

Yours sincerely,

Maris Bruzgulis.