Regarding the proposed fare increase I would like to make the following points.

Cityrail is basing much of its claim on "improved on time running" and "improved customer service". These claims are false due to the following:

On time running.

1. When the definition of on time running is changed and trains now run to a much slower timetable it can hardly be claimed this is much of an achievement.
2. Comparisons with on time running now versus the dark days of when Michael Costa was Minister are misleading. Go back a few more years and find that on time running was very good without the need to run very slow trains and redefine on time running. An attempt by CEO Vince Graham to blame the Waterfall Inquiry for slow trains backfired when the judge publicly refuted the claim.
3. Train times are in many cases worse than the 1930's.
4. It now takes me 1/4 hour longer to get to work (Loftus to St Leonards) and 1/4 longer to get home. That is 1/2 hour extra per day and 2 1/2 hours per week of my time wasted - just to enable Cityrail to fudge their on time running figures.
5. Regular major delays still plague the system. I was on the famous train that broke down on the Harbour Bridge and was stuck there for over 3 hours. After a couple of hours a lady demanded to know what was happening and staff told her that they had no idea but would tell her when they knew. Apparently it had never occurred to CEO Vince Graham that a train might break down on the harbour bridge and there was no plan to deal with the situation.

Customer service.

1. On of the persistent criticisms is of overcrowding. The blame for this lies squarely with the present CEO Vince Graham and the former minister Michael Costa who cancelled the final order of Millenium trains. This was a foolish decision especially as they now acknowledge that these trains are the most reliable on the system. (In fact many of the teething troubles were the fault of Railcorp and not the train builder)
2. A very visible front line of Cityrail is the army of Transit Officers. These men and women are a public relations disaster through no fault of their own. Once again it is the former minister Costa and the CEO Graham who have decided to adopt a very aggressive approach here. The plan to issue warnings to first offenders appears to have been merely an election stunt and is no longer being followed. Worse still one never sees the transit officers when you would like to see them - patrolling late night trains. Let's have two of these officers on every late night train like they used to. It seems transit officers are viewed merely as revenue raisers.
3. The much hated trackwork could be organised to have less effect on passengers. For example on the Illawarra line there are 4 tracks between Hurstville and the City and two of these should be kept open except in very unusual circumstances.
4. Station and train announcements. These have been the source of a large number of complaints. There is no need to have ear shattering "Stand Clear Doors Closing" announcements in a rude tone of voice. (On a trip overseas last year I did not encounter any rail system that did anything as rude as this.) Station announcements and even the "Stand Clear Doors Closing" announcements are the source of complaints by many unfortunate nearby residents (North Sydney Council measured the noise and found it was unacceptable inside people's bedrooms!!!). Some stations are worse than others but seriously I don't need to hear for the 5,687th time that "For my safety and protection, staff, transit officers and police randomly patrol this station" etc etc. Often there are only a few seconds between these announcements. Given that 99% of travellers do the right thing and the 1% who don't will never listen to the announcements they are achieving precisely nothing except

making life miserable for travellers. There was a time when I enjoyed train travel - not anymore and this is one of the main reasons.

5. Reduced services. During the disastrous era when Michael Costa was Minister large numbers of off peak and weekend services were slashed and have never been reinstated (up to 50% of services were cut on many lines). Fares for off peak and weekend services should be frozen until these services are reinstated. Apparently there are now plenty of staff to do this.

Best Practice

1. Productivity is in many cases very poor and compares poorly to overseas best practice For example drivers spend far less time actually driving than they would in comparable overseas systems. Cityrail is still stuck in the steam era here. Shouldn't they become more productive rather than asking for a fare increase from the public?

In conclusion may I request that IPART not just be a rubber stamp and either refuse the increase or limit it to less than the CPI given the shortcomings mentioned above. Especially off peak fares should not increase given the dramatic reduction in service quality and frequency on these services.

Yours sincerely,
Owen Heldon