

Submission to IPART on the 2007 Review of Bus Fares

From: Ken Wilson

I wish to address a number of issues that affect Bus commuters from Willoughby on the 272

I contend that the submission by the Ministry of Transport only tells one side of the story. There are many instances where services have deteriorated, over the last year and as an example I will use my own experiences on the 272 in relation to the contentions in the DOT submission

Bus Priority

With the opening of the Lane cove Tunnel 272 commuters were looking forward to Information as to the status of Clause 229 of the tunnel contract which requires the RTA to look at extending the Warringah Freeway bus lane to Willoughby Rd so as to avoid delays caused by extra traffic coming from Lane Cove

A letter to the Minister for transport asking the status of these proposed improvements was dispatched in March 2006. Despite about a dozen monthly reminders being sent to the Minister that his reply is outstanding, some 18 months later there has been no reply

In this time the Lane Cove tunnel has opened and with it extra traffic is making its way to the tunnel. Only a very few peak hour 272 services are unaffected and it is now not unusual for Naremburn 272 commuters to have their travel times extended from the advertised 10 minutes to over 1 hour. This is due to an increase in the travel time of the bus and the general late running of all services resulting in many services being full, unable to stop and resulting in much longer waiting times at the bus stop.

It could be argued that, since many proposed bus priority measures do not eventuate then it is not suitable to use them in a submission for a fare increase.

While off peak 272 services are not affected by the apparent in action on the tunnel conditions, travel times have also doubled for commuters in these periods as all the 272 services were canceled in September 2006 leaving city commuters no alternative other than to catch the longer routed alternative 273 service via North Sydney.

CASHLESS BUSES.

Commuters on the 272 and 205 might see some improvement in their travel times, however this would be unlikely to recoup more than 5% of the increase in travel times. While it is possible to purchase a travel 10 along Willoughby Rd and Penshurst St, the Castlecrag News-agency, despite representations from local progress association officials has no intention of selling the tickets. They claim that to do so would involve a loss to their fragile business particularly should tickets be stolen during a break in . This means that commuters catching a cashless 205, later this year, from the most popular stop will not be able to obtain a ticket from the News agency, and will have to catch a slower all stops bus to the city until such time as they manage to acquire a ticket. Hence in the case of the 205 this is not really a "service improvement" as it will increase travel times for many commuters.

COST OF SERVICES

I have no doubt that Sydney Buses needs extra revenue. As mentioned above I estimate the travel times for all 272 commuters have approximately doubled in the past year. Either in fighting traffic in the area where bus priority measures were proposed but not

delivered or in traveling the long way through North Sydney because either the 272 has been canceled or due to overcrowding on 272 services making it impossible to board them.

The costs of moving these commuters must have gone up at least 50%. If mismanagement of the transport system by the Government is justification for fare increases then 6% is not nearly enough.

CONCLUSION

A year ago the 272 was a successful attractive bus service which delivered large numbers of paying customers to the city in a quick and efficient manner.

Today it has fallen on hard times and in early October Willoughby Council gave away free coffee at points along Willoughby road for commuters waiting up to half an hour for a bus that actually had room and stopped to pick them up. The idea was to thank them for their patience and contribution to helping keep traffic congestion under control in the City..

As a tax payer I am unhappy that we have lost some good public transport here in a service that helped our city cope with rising housing density, and was a god send to working parents with children at Willoughby Public school (in particular the now canceled 2.10 pm 272 from the city which was ideal for term 1 Kindergarten parents and those attending their child's Assembly's at 2.30).

Most disturbing of all is that not only have the commuters lost a good service, but it appears that the economics of today's 272 are only a shadow of what they were a year ago with significant consequences for the treasury.

Ken Wilson