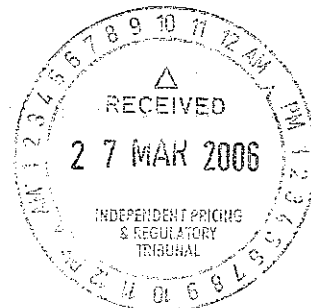


The Chief Executive Officer
Independent Pricing and Regulatory
Tribunal of NSW
P O Box Q290
QVB Post Office, NSW 1230



Dear Sir

Re: Determination of City Rail and Travel Pass Fares.

I refer to your recent notice in the press concerning the proposed public hearing to be held on Friday 21 April 2006 regarding the review being conducted by your Tribunal of fares to be charged from 1 July 2006.

I wish to lodge a strong objection to the government's argument for the train fares increase on the grounds that the trains particularly those running from the Central Coast to Sydney and return are not punctual and that the recently introduced timetable has added increased travel time.

I have been a train commuter from the Central Coast to Sydney for the past 33 years.

I respectfully submit that I have no hesitation in saying that the service has reached its lowest ebb in all of that time which I and some members of my family have been travelling on Central Coast trains to work in Sydney.

Indeed, the experience of the recent past will provide testimony of long delays occurring due to breakdowns, signalling failures, intoxicated employee/s (Eastwood/Epping Signal Box incident late 2005), the recently introduced train timetable, the lack of effective communication between railway management and train drivers/guards respecting train breakdowns/signal failures and the like.

At other times, by way of example, commuters have been advised waiting on Gosford railway station for a train connection to Narara around 6.31 pm that "the train's not going, because there is no driver." So then I catch a taxi home at a cost of around \$8.00. This too, is a fairly regular occurrence.

Over an extended period, I have respectfully telephoned through many complaints to the Railways complaint phone number 131 500 in the hope that my observations of inconvenience caused to train commuters by general mismanagement and obvious lack of leadership by the Executive Management area of Rail Corp would be acted upon. In my experience, the customer feedback I have provided them does not appear to be acted upon and no incremental improvements are made in my experience as their customer.

Listed below are some recent examples of problems experienced by this writer:-

Tuesday, 21 February 2006. 6.30am train Narara to Sydney did not arrive. Apparently no advice to waiting commuters through loud speaker system.

Monday 27 February 2006. 6.55am Train arrives at Narara with only four carriages to go to Sydney. Considerable overcrowding experienced.

Thursday, 2 March 2006. 6.55am train from Narara to City did not arrive. No announcement made.

Friday, 3 March 2006 6.55am train Narara to City.. Commuters advised it would be 10 minutes late. In the end, the train was some 40 minutes late. No reason given.

Monday, 6 March 2006. 6.55am train arrived around 7.00am. Guard sang out to commuters on the platform at Narara that the 7.01am train to the North Shore has been cancelled. This caused severe overcrowding on the 6.55am train which also had one carriage blocked off – no reason given for the carriage being out of service. Thus, returned home in disgust and drove car to work.

Wednesday, 15 March 2006. 6.55am train from Narara to City stopped north of Hawkesbury River train station for 1 hour and 10 minutes. Arrived at Central Railway Station at approximately 9.45am. Inadequate information was supplied by the train guard at the time as to the reason for the excessive delay. Initially he said they “weren’t sure, but the train in front stopped at Hawkesbury River Platform”. On arrival at work, I was advised by fellow workers that a Mr Vince Graham of Railcorp was heard on their car radios saying that lightning had caused the long delay at Hawkesbury River. Nice if he had got on the rail communications network and told us long suffering commuters the causation on the instant. Again, he’s addressed the wrong audience.

But the above are just a few examples in the very recent past. There have been many more instances I have noted over the years. One other particular annoyance is the ticket vending machines on platforms being either out of order or not serviced leaving commuters the risk of incurring a large fine.

I would request that no fare increase be granted until there is clear evidence of incremental improvement in punctuality/ reliability of trains and that better internal management including leadership by Railcorp is clearly displayed. Increased patronage of trains and/or proposed new strategies in infrastructure are in our view a false argument for increasing fares. Our particular trains at 5.00pm and 5.15 pm from Sydney to Gosford – under the recently introduced new timetable are virtually empty at regular intervals, whereas hitherto they were invariably full to capacity. Both of


these trains are exceptionally slow travelling to about Hornsby. One could walk or cycle faster.

I should also point out that since the introduction of the "new" train timetable late last year, I and other members of this family are now spending up to 1 hour 40 minutes extra time in total each week in the morning peak period and up to 50+ minutes per week on the evening return journey by trains to the Central Coast.

As recently reported in the media, I support the notion that we are living in a world class city, with a third world train service.

I sincerely trust that you will accept this letter in the spirit that it is intended which is to better serve our community.

Yours sincerely

Mr and Mrs T. O'Brien JP
 Mr D O'Brien and Miss L O'Brien