

13 October 2008

Subject: Report by Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal re increase in train fares.

SUBMISSION CONCERNING PROPOSED RAIL FARES INCREASE.

According to a report in then Sydney Morning Herald of October 4-5, The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, has recommended the price of train tickets, rise by an average of 24% over four years to 2012, assuming inflation grows at 3% a year.

It would appear that the fare increases have been based on the distance travelled between the station passengers join the train to the CBD. Therefore it has been worked out on an accounting model.

I strongly suggest that this way of calculating increases is wrong and grossly unfair to people, who through no fault of their own, live in outlying Western or South Eastern Sydney suburbs.

Let me give two illustrations from my own experience.

1. From 1964 to 1969 I was in charge of the NSW Government Welfare Department, then known as Child and Social Welfare Department. It was during this period that the Mt. Druitt Housing estate was developed by the then Housing Commission. The first suburb was Whalan, and other suburbs were added progressively.

People were first allocated houses there from the Inner City suburbs such as Surry Hills, Waterloo, and Alexandria. Due to their houses being demolished for slum clearance, a policy of the then State Government.

The Railway Station was and is still located in what is now known as "Old Mt. Druitt" which was then a small suburb. To qualify for such a house, the family income had to be in the lower socio-economic group

. The male was usually employed in an unskilled position such as labourer. Before moving he normally walked to a nearby workplace, or caught a bus. However when re located at Mt. Druitt, he had to catch a bus to Mt. Druitt station, then a train to Redfern or Central, then another bus to place of employment. Added to these extra costs was the money, which had to be spent on furniture for the new house. At that time a firm named Waltons, which had their Head quarters Corner of George St and Park St, employed canvassers, who went door knocking and offered to completely furnish the homes at an exorbitant rate of interest. When some people applied to my office for financial assistance the first question asked was "how much do you owe Walton's?"

Some men found the financial burden too great and deserted their wives and children, and the State and Federal Governments had to grant allowances to the wives! At least one man I remember "faked" and was actually still living at home!

The Blacktown district also included the Housing Commissio suburbs of Seven Hills and Lalor Park, which had been developed by the Housing Commission in the 1950's and early 1960's. The residents there had to catch a bus to Seven Hills station and similar comments apply.

2. From 1980 to 1985 I was Regional Director of the Department, which had then been renamed Department of Youth and Community Services (it is now DOCS!)

The Housing Commission had previously developed new Suburbs at Minto, Airds Claymore, and many parts of Campbelltown. In the early 1980's they developed another suburb named Rosemeadow, well out of Campbelltown. Again the tenants were in lower income group, and had to travel to Campbelltown station by bus.

The main thing I suggest has to be considered is the Social conditions of the people, who had no say in where they lived, it was take it or no house offered.

Two other matters need consideration

1. Many people have purchased house in outer suburbs, as they cannot afford to purchase close the City. Such suburbs include Hassall Grove on the Eastern side of the Mt. Druitt estate; South Penrith and Lower Blue Mountains. They all have to either drive to the nearest station or catch a bus. No Government transport available whereas inner city dwellers have choice of one bus or one train.

2. The State Government is currently re organizing management of the Railways. According to report in Sydney Morning Herald of 10 October 2008, the Government spent \$10 million dollars on a consultants report about the Railways. It was called a "Damning report".

The report included the following comments

1. Maintenance standards on Sydney trains were "three times worse than on similar railway networks"

2. Breakdowns are the largest cause of delays on the network; accounting for about 30% of all holds ups with the worst problems on the Western, Northern and North Shore Lines.

3. On time running remains a critical issue, affecting as many as a quarter of all morning commuters and half of all afternoon and evening trips.

This is hardly the appropriate time to increase rail fares!

I would like these comments made on good faith to be considered in any review.

David Ronald Jarvis