

Dear Committee,

I wish to remind the Committee of the problems faced by the elderly who have no access to private car transport, and, in particular, to the physical, mental and emotional costs of isolation.

The current \$2.50 daily price of a travel Pass for the elderly actually limits older people's ability to travel . At \$15.00 a week it is a hefty impost on a pension or, especially for women, low superannuation.

(Women's rights to contribute to superannuation were very restricted in the past. I, for example, one of only SIX professional women in the then Commonwealth Public Service, lost my job and any entitlements the hour I got married in 1959.! After that, with children, I was restricted to part-time casual employment. The Whitlam Government brought in equal pay in the public service, and threw out the marriage bar, but there are thousands of women like myself, working in the 1950s and 1960s who had no effective superannuation.)

The current \$2.50 cost for older passengers applies whether the trip is to, say, Wollongong from Sydney, or to Balmain from Rozelle!

I hope that the Committee pays deep attention to the social needs of older people, and to the connection between social interaction and health. Population projections suggest that the proportion of people living alone is rising very quickly, and it is well-attested that lone-living is a major cause of Depression and agoraphobia.

I am an ordinary sort of person, like company, get VERY depressed when restricted to the house. I am no doubt typical of many thousands of older people. here is how it is:

Eye-sight problems mean that my driving days are numbered. My family is scattered all round Sydney. My shopping is in another suburb. My church is in another suburb. My hospital is in another suburb. I like to go out to hear music, look at pictures, go to the movies, have a look at the beach, do window-shopping. I rely on public transport, do not see it as anything other than my RIGHT.

I believe that affordable public transport is a public benefit, and should be provided, subsidised, by government. Taxes are paid (I paid them!) for the PUBLIC GOOD. "Civilisation" implies a co-operative society.

The last rise in the Pensioner Travel Pass, from \$1.00 to \$2.50 was way in excess of rises in the Cost of Living, and more than five times the rate of Inflation! it was done without wide publicity or requests for submissions. No wonder it got past even my radar.

I would implore the Committee to consider the Pensioner Pass, at its current price, as an obligation on the community to facilitate a "civic" life for the older people among us. Getting about increases mental health, reduces isolation, encourages inter-action (have you ever travelled on the 445 bus from Balmain to Leichhardt? Full of Italian older women, chatting, laughing away in Italian, a real sense of community.), supports the shops and enlivens the city.

Public transport is a great leveller and it must be affordable.

Yours faithfully,

Margretta Sculthorp