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Submission for the 2008 Review of bus fares and Newcastle bus and ferry services

In response to the review of bus fares, I wish to highlight that international students who are studying at NSW schools, universities and private colleges, are a group of public transport patrons that are not eligible for travel concession. The proposed increase of bus fares will cause further financial hardship to them. If this group has access to travel concession as given to Australian students, they would be able to utilise the public transport services more, and this would increase the revenue.

As a professional working with international students at UNSW, I believe this denial of travel concession to international students greatly damages the reputation of the NSW Government, the image of Sydney as a world class city and NSW as a premier tourist destination.

The damaging effect of full fare transport costs can be felt on various levels:

- The majority of international students live within walking distance of their educational institutions to save costs on transport. This leads to inflated rent, overcrowding, and complaints from local residents of "ghettos of students" in suburbs close to metropolitan universities, e.g. UNSW, Sydney, UTS.
- Many international students are unwilling to use public transport to explore the city, and less to travel to other parts of the state of New South Wales. The travel experience of these students, who come from all over the world, is limited due to the costs of public transport. Those with a negative impression of Sydney as an overcrowded, congested and expensive city will pass this message onto their family and friends and this would impact adversely on the tourist industry for New South Wales.
- Students have friends who study in other states, like Queensland and WA which offer transport concession, and their response to the decision of the NSW government to deny them travel concession is often one of disbelief and dismay. This sentiment is often passed on to relatives and friends who may then choose not to come to study at NSW. This would mean a huge financial loss to the NSW economy.

If the government is interested to increase revenue to cover the escalating costs of providing public transport, perhaps it is timely to re-examine this policy of denying international students access to travel concession. Granting this group of public transport patrons travel concessions will also help to alleviate some of the overcrowding problem in certain parts of Sydney, and to promote Sydney and NSW as a friendly, welcoming and attractive place to visit.

Should further information regarding this submission be required, please feel free to contact me on (02) 93855334 or b.chow@unsw.edu.au