

Dear Sir or Madam

I have been asked to write a short submission to your organisation on behalf of the Older Womens' Network of NSW (OWN), in regard to the current Review which I understand is being held into this matter by your Department. Most of our members are reliant on the Age Pension for their income and are, therefore, extremely concerned that there could be further rises to bus and ferry fares in the near future.

This concern leads me to make my first point which is that the rate for bus and ferry fares for Seniors and pensioners has only recently been raised by more than 100%, from \$1.20 to \$2.50, beginning from 1 January, 2005.

Should the government persist in increasing the rebate again on pensioner and seniors bus and ferry fares, many people will be badly affected.

Thousands of such people are doing vital voluntary work and some volunteers need to travel in peak hours, (including many members of the Older Womens' Network). This could lead to many people dropping out of voluntary services.

Senior travel rebates are one way of the government thanking those people who have given so much of their time, energy and expertise to the service of the country.

Increasing the pensioner rebate to more than \$2.50 will mean halving travel for many or even worse. This issue goes to the matter of health and welfare. Seniors need to get out and about frequently for healthy pursuits such as: walking; participating in healthy exercise groups; attending social gatherings; or visiting the cinema. etc, all of which contributes positively towards a healthy psychological outlook as well as helping to maintain their physical health as well. By keeping fares at an affordable rate it could be seen as a positive and preventative measure which would save the Government many thousands, if not millions, of dollars in health costs by way of maintaining a healthy population of senior citizens.

The Older Womens' Network also notes that motorists are handed \$2000 grants for gas conversions and \$30 credits on tollway e-tags. Should pensioner and seniors bus and ferry fares be increased it would seem to be an incredibly unfair situation, especially in a country that prides itself on a fair go for all.

I would also like to refer to the following statements by Allan Miles of Action for Public Transport in which he writes that:

\* "About half of Sydney<sup>1</sup>s government buses have been using gas fuel for years .... <sup>3</sup>It's about time transit users (obtained) some credit for their restraint on the consumption of fossil fuels, and their contribution to reduced urban air pollution and global warming<sup>2</sup>. Further,

\* <sup>3</sup>... every bus which uses a toll road is already equipped with a tag<sup>2</sup>; and

\* "... that the government seem(s) to have no problems with breaking road tunnel contracts to improve conditions for motorists. "However," he said, "they can't extend the popular TravelPass tickets to private bus areas or give equal TravelTen discounts to private bus passengers because 'it's not in the contract'."

\* Raising fares again is only going to increase traffic congestion even further,"

\* The Premier's much vaunted 'whole of government' approach to transport

and traffic would see fares held steady, so the whole community would benefit from a shift to public transport."

The Older Womens' Network would support the above views.

One final point I wish to make is that the NSW Government has proposed a change to public transport for off peak travellers in many areas. This could be expected to affect pensioners, and seniors, as well as other low income earners in the main. The Older Womens' Network submits that this is an extremely unfair situation for our members because bus fares increased to \$2.50 when they had an expectation that a particular service was available. Now the service is taken away we are still expected to pay the same amount, or more, for a greatly reduced service. In my opinion, It is hard for the State Government to justify any further increases in bus and ferry fares under these circumstances, and further, that this reduction in service should actually justify seniors having their bus fares reduced back to the previous rate of \$1.20 rather than have our fares increased any further.

Yours faithfully

MAUREEN KING  
on behalf of  
OLDER WOMENS' NETWORK NSW