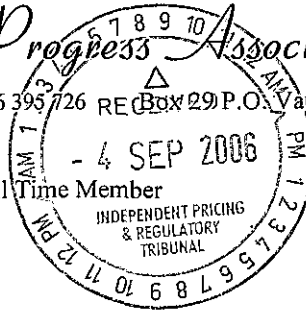


# The Vacluse Progress Association

Established 1915 ABN 12 756 395 726 RE Box 29 P.O. Vacluse NSW 2030

Mr James P Cox, Chief Executive Officer and Full Time Member  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
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## Review of Bus and Ferry Fares

We represent residents of the Vacluse and Watsons Bay districts of Woollahra Municipality, in Sydney.

Our interest in the Review lies in our long-standing concern to ensure adequate and affordable public transport for the Vacluse peninsula.

For our harbourside area, the interaction between ferry and land transport is a matter of considerable moment. In practical terms, the only real interaction that we presently observe between local bus and ferry services is the *Ferrylink* notation on bus stops, and the (welcome) signage at wharves indicating alternative public transport options. Bus and ferry services tend to integrate by accident – that is, if mainline buses are running to time, it is usually possible to estimate waiting times for ferry services. It is not possible to take a bus trip to connect reliably with a ferry trip. Specific feeder bus services for the ferry services at Watsons Bay and Rose Bay simply do not exist.

We think the continued IPART emphasis in its fare review reports on the high incomes of ferry passengers fails to recognise the very real limitations on access to ferries for people of lower incomes who live away from the harbourside. This is an important aspect of the land-based feeder services issue, and of the presentation management of fare determinations.

Liaison with residents seems less than optimal. *For example*, the introduction of the Garden Island ferry service by inserting it into the established Rose Bay/Watsons Bay schedule appears to have been arranged without prior reference to the public generally (or even local residents) for comment, and with minimal fanfare or advertisement. The extra stop in an already attenuated route is hardly welcome to passengers looking to take advantage of the potential for a direct and speedy connexion between Rose Bay/Watsons Bay and the CBD during off-peak times.

Fare levels are really a subordinate issue when service scheduling gaps leave people waiting too long for buses. Following the last review of eastern suburbs schedules, our bus services lost frequencies at important times of the day. Patronage cannot establish or grow if services are infrequent and/or unreliable; rather, extended wait time tends to discourage bus travel and make it essentially a *hate purchase*. Reduction of scheduled services because of low patronage simply exacerbates the problem. Our local bus schedules indicate long periods without service, especially in the evenings when entertainment-focused travel might be anticipated. The long gaps maximise use of private vehicle travel, if only for safety reasons. The process is self-reinforcing.

Administered bus fares under the present MOT regime have aspects that warrant considerable caution. Because the system is relatively new, we recognise that it may well be modified in the short term. The underlying principle of cost recoupment for nominated components of service provision seems likely to produce an incentive for cost/price formula manipulation rather than service effectiveness and efficiency, as it stands. We urge IPART to explore ways to manage and minimise fare changes that merely reflect (intelligent) regulatory strategy.

Michael Rolfe, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Rolfe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name "Michael Rolfe, President".

31 August 2006