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Media Release

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Have your say on future Opal fares

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has invited community feedback on proposed maximum Opal fares for the next 4 years.

Tribunal Chair Carmel Donnelly said IPART is reviewing maximum fares for train, bus, ferry, light rail, Metro and on-demand services within the Opal network, which includes Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast, the Illawarra, and the Hunter.

"The maximum fare protects consumers from excessive charging, but the price passengers actually pay is set by the NSW Government and all current ticket prices are set below the current maximum fare," Ms Donnelly said.

"In NSW, taxpayers, not passengers, fund the majority of the cost of providing public transport because it provides broad benefits to the whole community, including reducing congestion on our roads, supporting economic activity, education, social connectivity and environmental advantages.

"It is important to balance the need for affordable public transport fares, which many people rely on, with the rising cost of providing safe and efficient services."

IPART is proposing an average 2% increase above inflation to maximum fares compared to current maximum fares set by IPART in 2020.

- For bus and light rail, most maximum fares would stay the same as they are now, with an increase of 1.6% to the 3 to 8 km distance band.
- For train and Metro, maximum fares would rise between 0.7% and 4.1%, depending on the distance band.
- For Sydney Ferry services, maximum fares would increase between 3% and 4%.
- The Newcastle-Stockton Ferry maximum fare would increase by 7%.

IPART is also proposing that the maximum fares set by IPART increase with inflation in July each year using CPI.

Ms Donnelly said IPART's Draft Determination would ensure that passengers only pay for the shortest possible track distance between two train stations, ending an anomaly called the "CBD increment" which put some passengers into a higher distance band when travelling to City Circle stations.

The Tribunal has also considered affordability issues and made a draft recommendation for Transport for NSW to expand eligibility for the Opal Concession card.

"We have made draft recommendations to Transport for NSW to consider linking the package of single fares, discounts including the transfer discount, caps and other elements of the Opal fare package so that fare changes apply consistently across the fare package," Ms Donnelly said.

"We have found that the transfer discount (for passengers who switch between modes of transport to get to their destination) has remained at \$2 since it was introduced in 2016. If the package of discounts and caps were linked, the transfer discount would automatically increase as fares increase, maintaining its value for passengers who don't have a direct service to their destination."

IPART's Draft Report will be available from Friday 16 August at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au. Submissions on the draft proposals are open until 16 September 2024. An online public hearing will be held on 3 September.

IPART's Final Report will be delivered to the NSW Government in October 2024.

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