



In February this year, IPART finished its review of Opal fares for public transport. The NSW Government has now released its decision on our recommendations.

We decided at that time that the Government could increase fares by an average of 5% per year over the next four years.

We suggested these increases be offset by expanding off peak discounts and broadening the availability of concession fares to Commonwealth health care card holders.

This determination was made in the context of strong growth in the use of public transport. Also, fares were not keeping up with the substantial costs of new investment in transport services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed the situation. People are being encouraged to work from home and the community to limit travel on public transport to essential journeys.

The public is also being encouraged to consider alternatives including walking and cycling.

This requires a different approach not contemplated by us or the people we consulted with through the review. We think it is appropriate that the NSW Government takes the current circumstances into account when considering what fares to set.

IPART proposed the increases be offset by introducing off-peak fares on bus and light rail to assist with dealing with crowding at peak times. This is especially important now.

We also recommended that the NSW Government provide discounted fares to NSW residents who hold a current commonwealth health care card. This would make it easier for people who have lost their jobs to access essential transport services.