

Dear Mr Koperberg,

### CityRail proposed fare increases

I am writing to express my concern with the changes to CityRail fares recommended in the draft IPART report released in October, which called for responses by 5 November. I have sent a submission to IPART, but also want to inform you, as my local member, of my concerns.

The report recommends that the fare structure should change and that fares for longer trips should increase substantially. In particular, it recommends that the weekly fares for commuters travelling 75-85 km (which includes my station of Springwood), will increase by 17% on 1 January 2009 and a further 9% (plus CPI) by 1 January 2012. I currently pay well over \$2,200 pa for rail travel to the city, so these increases would add close to \$400 to our family's expenses next year and close to \$600 pa (plus CPI increases) in 3 years time. What is even more disturbing is that these increases are only the beginning of a dramatic reduction in weekly discounts which are proposed. Currently the weekly discount for a Springwood ticket is 44%. This discount will be reduced to 37% from 1 January 2009, with a view to reducing it to 20% in coming years. If these changes are introduced, the overall increase to Springwood fares would be 43%!

These changes are very unwise in light of the massive challenges our area and indeed the world face in light of global warming. Surely the government should be encouraging those who live far from the city to take public transport, rather than drive. Many in the Blue Mountains and indeed Western Sydney, may be forced to drive because of the large fare increases. Policies which discourage the use of public transport and put more cars on the road go directly against the policies of other governments around the world, particularly in Europe, which are introducing policies to reduce car traffic. The external benefit factored into the report to cover lower greenhouse emissions due to train patronage is very low at \$25 million, which is a tiny proportion of total CityRail expenses. Also, it is not good enough for IPART to leave out the agglomeration benefits discussed in Section 7 of the report because it is too hard to quantify, as this effect is substantial – the arguments for excluding agglomeration benefits are not convincing.

Also, the proposed changes risk the nature of Lower Mountains as a commuting community. Young families like mine have moved to the Lower Mountains due to its housing affordability along with its lifestyle and have factored in the sizeable but manageable current train fares into our budgets. While some fare increases from time to time are understandable, increases such as those proposed are not easy to absorb into the family budget.

- 4 NOV 2008

In the last election, I voted for you. If these changes were to go ahead, I would be changing my vote from Labor to the Coalition in the next state election. I would not primarily be changing my vote because I would be paying more, but because this policy change would demonstrate that this government is short-sighted and shows no knowledge of the forthcoming carbon economy which will have such an impact on the way we live. Also it shows that the government shows no planning sense in not facilitating commuters from the fringe. Higher fares mean less commuters from outlying areas and more demand for housing closer to the city.

If you have any hope of being re-elected in the next election, even though it is some time away, you need to be seen to be opposing these changes. This may not be popular with certain members of your party, but you primarily represent the people of the Blue Mountains, as it is they who voted you in to State parliament.

