



TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS: WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

F A C T S H E E T

Access to affordable transport is an essential element of social justice. People need access to transport to participate in education, to seek and undertake employment, to access services and to participate in social and community life.

There are obviously many dimensions to accessible transport, including the proximity of transport routes and physical accessibility. One of the key elements, however, is affordability. Concession fares for people in low incomes are the best way to make transport affordable, yet there are many disadvantaged people in New South Wales who are denied access to concessions.

Who misses out?

Some examples of people who are currently ineligible for concession cards are:

- young people on youth wages, who may earn as little as \$190 per week;
- unemployed people who have been breached by Centrelink;
- unemployed people under the age of 21 whose parents have combined income of over \$30,442;
- women aged between 50 and 60 who receive the Centrelink Widows Allowance.

People in each of these categories have extremely low incomes, yet they are expected to pay full fares on public transport.

Public vs non-government transport

For people who are reliant on non-government transport (eg private buses), the situation is even worse. For example:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd year apprentices receive concessions on public transport, but not on non-government transport;
- people with vision impairment who have a Vision Impaired Persons Pass can travel free on public services but have to pay full fare on many non-government services;
- students aged between 16 and 18 travel at concession rates on public transport but not on most non-government transport;
- full-time students under 30 have access to concession fares at all times on public transport, but on other transport this is only available for travel to and from classes.

Case study 1:

A 17 year old trainee travels from the Blue Mountains to Mt Druitt on a private bus and then a train. It takes 45 minutes one way and costs \$60 per week. She earns \$190 per week, leaving only \$130 for accommodation, living and education expenses.

Case study 2:

An age pensioner living in Palm Beach can travel to and from the city for \$1.10 on a Pensioner Excursion Ticket, which provides unlimited travel on government transport for 24 hours.

Another age pensioner living in Kellyville has to pay \$9.60 for a return journey to the city, because he has to use non-government transport.

The fact that many socially and economically disadvantaged regions of the state are serviced solely by non-government transport makes these inequities even worse. Transport concessions are the only type of concessions that differ according to where somebody lives. Other concessions, such as concessions on utilities and rates, are offered equally, regardless of region.

Why the difference?

Government and non-government transport services are reimbursed at different levels enabling government services to provide a greater level of concessions to their customers.

Listed below are examples of where government services receive reimbursement for providing concessions:

- tertiary students (including apprentices and trainees);
- school students 16 years and over;
- vision-impaired persons;
- age pensioners.

Non-government transport providers receive no reimbursement or subsidy for the above examples. This contributes to the concession inequity experienced by people who are reliant on privately-operated transport throughout NSW.

What can you do?

It is vital that we put affordability of transport on the agenda for the State election.

To help us to do this:

- write to your local State MP and to Transport Minister, Carl Scully, using the attached letter writing tips;
- distribute this information and campaign material to other community groups in your area.

For more information:

Alan Kirkland, Director, NCOSS – phone 9211 2599 / email alan@ncoss.org.au



AN AFFORDABLE AND FAIR SYSTEM FOR ALL

PRINCIPLES FOR FAIR TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS IN NSW

Arrangements providing public transport concessions in NSW are inequitable, disadvantaging many people in both urban and rural areas.

A State Government review of transport concessions has been underway since 1999. To date there has been no resolution and high costs of transport continue to impact on the lives of many disadvantaged people.

The Government must resolve the inequities inherent in the current concession regime – doing nothing is not an option.

The signatories to this statement call on the NSW Government to implement a fair system of transport concessions based on the following principles:

1. Access to affordable transport is a prerequisite for social and economic participation.
2. Transport concession equity is essential – across the state and across concession categories.
3. Concessions must be targeted at disadvantaged people first.
4. Expenditure on concessions must be directly linked to the Government's social justice strategy and statements.
5. The concessions offered, and the level of discount they provide, should be based on a transparent and consistent policy framework.
6. Offering concessions to people who are better off than people who miss out contravenes principles of equity and social justice.

We support the call for the New South Wales Government to complete its review of transport concession based on the above principles.

This statement has been endorsed by:

Acquired Brain Injury Group Inc, Aged and Disability Support Services, Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre, Blind Citizens Australia Tweed Valley Branch, Blue Mountains Commuter and Transport Users Association, Brick Industry Group Training, Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group, Bulli Community Health Centre, Bungree Aboriginal Association, Camden Local Youth Group, Campbelltown Neighbour Aid, Central Coast Community Council, Central Coast Health Community Nursing, Central Coast Volunteer Referral Agency Inc, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, Community Connections North Coast, Council of Social Service of NSW, CWGA, Disability Information Advocacy Service, Disabled Persons Resource Service, Drug and Alcohol Women's Network Inc, Eastern Area Service for Youth, Education Centre Against Violence, Evans River K-12 Community School, Family Crisis Service Blacktown, Family Journeys, Gloucester Youth Service, Greater Taree City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation Community Development Employment Project, Illawarra Youth Housing, Interconnect, Kalon House of Welcome, Kempsey Youth Refuge, Kiama Community Transport, Links to Learning Program, Lismore City Council, Macarthur District Temporary Family Care, Macarthur Group Training Ltd, Macarthur Migrant Centre, Macleay Youth Accommodation Service, Meals on Wheels Woy Woy, Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre, Nagle Centre, Nambucca Shire Council, Neighbourhood Development Team, North St Marys Neighbourhood Centre, Northern Sector Community Health, NSW Department of Housing, Open House, Penrith Mt Druitt DV Court Assistance Scheme, Penrith Women's Health, People With Disabilities NSW, Richmond Valley Council, Rosemount Youth and Family Services, See Foundation, Skills Training Employment Program, Springwood Youth Project, St Vincent de Paul, St Vincent de Paul Animation Committee, Staysafe Wagga, The Hills Community Aid and Information Services Inc, The Parks Community Network, The Wayback Committee, Tumut and Talbingo Community Transport, Welfare Rights Centre, Werrington Community Project Inc, Wollondilly Community Development Committee, Woy Woy Peninsula Neighbourhood Service Inc, YAPA Western Sydney, Yes Youth and Family Services, Youth Accommodation Association

TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS

LETTER WRITING TIPS

Who to write to:

- Carl Scully MP, Minister for Transport, Level 34, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney 2000;
- your local State member of parliament;
- your local newspaper.

Points to make in your letter:

- Access to transport is essential for people to play full, active lives;
- People need to be able to afford transport in order to study, look for work, attend health services, volunteer and participate in community life;
- Many people on very low incomes are currently forced to pay full fares for transport. This includes many unemployed people who need to be able to travel to look for work;
- People who live in areas serviced by privately-operated transport are particularly disadvantaged because many concessions that are available on public transport are not available on privately-operated routes;
- The Government has let disadvantaged communities down by failing to fix these problems.

What to do with your response:

Please forward copies of any response you receive to:

Council of Social Service of NSW
66 Albion St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Fax 9281 1968