

**Submission
No 57**

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

Name: Mr Stuart Coppock

Date Received: 31 March 2022

Stuart Coppock
BA LLB MBA MTax FIACD

The Secretariat
Portfolio Committee No 6 – Transport
NSW Legislative Council

Re: Privatisation of bus services Inquiry

Summary of Content of Submission

- The need for a transparent, operational and functioning service charter available to the public and requiring compliance from the private owned bus operator.
- Such a charter to be a statute enacted by the NSW Parliament.

Operational and functioning service charter for a privately owned bus service.

If a State Government provides the right to a private operator to provide a bus service to the public, when formerly provided by the State or not, there is a need for a service charter to be part of the commercial arrangement.

The privately owned bus operator (or any other public transport mode e.g., ferries) is licensed by the NSW Parliament to provide a public service.

When a Government agency or Department operate a public service such as health, trains, education there is accountability (of sorts) through the Parliamentary process. For example, prior to bus privatisation in the Willoughby State Electorate, representations were made to the then sitting member, the Premier of NSW, about concerns of changes to bus services. These were presented to the Minister for Transport. Alternatively, these same people could have contacted a Member of the Legislative Council and that MP might have placed Questions on Notice, used Budget Estimates to ask questions or even held an Enquiry such as the one this submission is being made.

Privatisation has removed this capacity of the citizen of this State to make representations.

A quick exercise of an internet search for 'bus timetables Sydney' or 'service charter for private bus use in NSW' will obtain no useful information.

The first search takes one to Routes and timetables Transport NSW.

<https://transportnsw.info/routes/bus>

Go to 'Other aps and timetables' take the category 'Bus operator maps',

<https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/bus/bus-operator-maps>

Then choose 'Sydney'

<https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/bus/bus-operator-maps>

There is a choice of 'Area Maps' and 'Network Maps'

Area Maps – Busways around the Northern beaches

<https://transportnsw.info/document/3953/buses-around-northern-beaches.pdf>

Network Maps

Keolis Downer northern beaches and lower north shore network map

<https://transportnsw.info/document/5202/region-8-map-january-2021.pdf>

Comments:

The maps are impossible to read unless a magnifying glass is at hand.

There is no timetable. Only bus line number

One continues:

If one takes the number on the road to Chatswood of bus 120 and conducts an internet search of that under 'bus line 120 Sydney'

<https://transportnsw.info/routes/details/sydney-buses-network/120/27120>

you find a PDF timetable and a route map.

Timetable

<https://transportnsw.info/documents/timetables/27-120-Chatswood-to-City-QVB-Loop-Service-20220128.pdf>

Comment:

That seven internet searches are required to locate the timetable down a specific route is an approach of 'look and see' and 'keeping searching – it has to be here somewhere'.

It could not be called user friendly. Yet to develop a website that has more connections back of house is not difficult in 2022.

Service NSW

If one types into an internet browser 'bus services north shore services nsw' the closest one gets to this is Northern NSW and how to apply for a licence or permit. Scan down the result page and one gets 'Bus/transportnsw.info' and 'north west and north shore Sydney bus services changes'

<https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/bus#/>

This is a better website as it has 'timetables and maps',

<https://transportnsw.info/routes/bus>

Conclusion Comment:

Whilst internet searching and an exercise in patience and persistence the above exercise illustrates the necessary information is available, but it is somewhat buried.

This is not good service. Furthermore, in a privatised bus system there is no requirement that this service be maintained at its present level.

Other apparent contractual measures not readily in the public domain

It is unconfirmed that the following measures are part of the NSW Government's bus privatisation measures.

- To make a complaint about a bus service the process remains unchanged. Transport for New South Wales will forward the complaint to the service provider who hopefully will get back to the person making the complaint.
- Bus Operators are fined \$500 for every timetabled trip that they do not operate if Transport for New South Wales deems that the operator is at fault for not operating the timetabled service.
- To add or delete bus services or suggest a new bus route the individual, or advocacy or the operator must submit a business case to Transport for New South Wales.

On 14 November 2019 in a motion to do with Bus service privatisation

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1820781676-80999/link/2231>

The Minister for Finance and Small Business stated that a government can:

'engage in a process to deliver public transport in a more efficient manner. That is at the heart of the Government's approach. The whole process of the Government recycling assets and engaging in privatisation is about making sure that we have a better system for delivery of outcomes for the people of this State.'

An efficient bus service is not just about business efficiency it must be also about customer satisfaction and access through information. These issues are 'hand in glove'.

Customer Service Charter

Again, type the words 'nsw government service charter' in a browser and the following search is returned:

- Customer Service Charter – Water NSW,
- Review of the Draft Service Charter prepared for the NSW Government, (Ageing, Disability and Home Care April 2013) and
- Client Service Charter – Department of Infrastructure,

The concept of a service charter is not new or unique. Rather it has been one of the many policies organisations across all sectors are suggested to have in place.

It begs the question then that when a government service is being moved to private operators how the interests of the Government's clients are protected. How is a service reviewed in the event of bad performance? How can a community petition for a new service? But more importantly how do the public know how to go about these issues or what contractual performance measures are in place that they might utilise and how?

A possible model

That the service charter ideally to be effective must be:

- Transparent to the public,
- Contain mechanisms that are accessible to the public,
- Have public administration oversight with regular and fulsome reporting into the public domain, and
- with some form of Parliamentary review and assessment.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Coppock

31 March 2022