

**Submission  
No 60**

## **INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES**

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SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES INQUIRY -  
MARCH 2022.

#### REGION 9 – A PASSENGER'S VIEW.

As a user of the \$2.50-a-day Opal “seniors” card, resident in the Inner West, but working and shopping in the East, bus travel has become much more difficult since the Sydney Eastern Suburbs (Region 9) bus route changes on 5 December 2021. Earlier, similar changes to the north-western routes, have also contributed to my travel difficulties.

For me, a single point-to-point trip now requires many more changes of vehicle, causing inconvenience, much walking between bus stops, and additional waiting, all of which has not only increased overall trip times, but made total travel times highly variable, and therefore very unpredictable. Passengers trying to make the new connections now need to devote additional time to consulting timetables, maps, or devices, with the added risk of making errors. Even determining the location of the stop from which one's next bus departs can be a challenge. It won't be the same stop, probably won't even be adjacent, and is often city blocks away!

#### THE REGION 9 CHANGES.

The extent of the changes in Region 9 are dramatic, probably unprecedented, and its very easy to get lost in the details. However, some significant decisions were made which are highly questionable and will remain contentious:-

What was the rationale for the removal of the Bondi to Burwood Route 400, arguably one of the most effective and popular bus routes in Sydney? Its "replacement" is the route 390X and the route 350. Interaction between these new routes at Maroubra Junction is especially weak so important destinations such as UNSW university and Prince Of Wales Hospital have lost their direct link to the airport area and transferring between these routes to access the airport is problematic to say the least, and especially for trips to the International Terminal, as there is no “same-stop” transfer.

What was the rationale for ceasing to operate ANY bus service to the International Airport terminal from the East? Route 350 only operates as far as the DOMESTIC Terminal. This is now a forced transfer (to route 420), to get to or from the International terminal. For some passengers up to 3 buses are now required to access the International Terminal. Another great "achievement" of the plan?

What was the rationale for eliminating the critical interface between South Eastern buses and Western bus services at the purpose-built dedicated bus interchange at Railway Square? Only the peak hour 310 remains, offering a token connection for residents in Botany/Mascot or for customers seeking to transfer off south-east (SE) services to westbound buses. Passengers now suffer the experience of travelling PAST the nearest transfer stop in Pitt St before they can alight from SE services that loop around Belmore Park. Seamless transfers? - not likely ! Again, there is no “same-stop” transfer.

What was the rationale for splitting the PM peak hour services to E and SE suburbs between Elizabeth St and Castlereagh Streets? All departing PM express services now operate on

Castlereagh St - not Elizabeth St - and the remaining E and SE all-stops services are located in Elizabeth St.

Why have “loop” routes been introduced? What are the implications for passenger information systems with these suburban style loop routes? What are the implications for service quality and on-time running with loop routes compared to the previous operating patterns.

Why have forced transfers been implemented just short of Sydney's CBD, and other key destinations in this Region, well known for its high patronage based on DIRECT SERVICES to key destinations with minimal or nil transfers required?

This list is by no means exhaustive.

So why were the changes made? That is the key question.

I believe that FEWER buses are needed to run the network introduced on 5th December 2021.

So, was the prime consideration COST CUTTING, and manipulating the network into a shape that would satisfy an accountant? There can be no other logical conclusion. In such circumstances public convenience naturally becomes a casualty.

Any benefits which might have arisen from the December 2021 Region 9 changes are certainly debatable when compared to the previous network. I assert that it is most certainly not the users who have benefited.

It has become clear - Sydney's buses are now a “business” – and no longer a public service!  
RECOMMENDATION.

The Legislative Council Inquiry should -

1 – Seek answers to the questions above,

2 - Advocate for a more user-friendly network in Region 9, tending toward a reversion to that which was in place prior to December 2021.

3 – Determine whether any network changes which may have led to a reduction in the cost to government (i.e.,taxpayers) of providing public bus services may have led also to a more general lowering of public convenience, social equity, and productivity in Sydney, or even in NSW, due to increased public inconvenience and/or increased or more unpredictable travel times, or compromised social interaction.

4 – Recommend that EVERY Sydney bus stop be appropriately labelled, so that intending passengers would know whether or not “express” buses will stop there.

5 – Be aware that, with the current program of replacing Sydney's bus shelters, it appears that the space available at each stop for the display of service information is being drastically reduced. How will service information be impacted, and should the Inquiry make a finding on this matter?

6 – Recommend that hard-copy, large-format, bus network maps be made readily available to the public for each “Region”, as the same maps are very slow to download from the internet and impossible to read on a mobile phone.

A major shortcoming of the profound network changes was that no hard-copy Region 9 network map was made available for public distribution before the changes. A booklet outlining the changes was distributed - but without a map.

7 – Seek to measure any decline in patronage which may have resulted from the introduction of the network changes (even given any impact of Covid 19). The Inquiry should take care not to be misled by “loading” figures from TfNSW, which would have increased as a result of the massive increase in the need for passengers to change buses en-route.

30 March 2022.