

**Submission
No 72**

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

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Privatisation of Bus Services Submission

Until 5 December 2021 when the buses in the Eastern Suburbs were either cut or routes changed, the bus service was very good.

I had commuted using the buses from either Coogee or Randwick for more than 30 years. I had also been using the buses for leisure purposes.

It was possible to travel from Coogee Beach all the way to Circular Quay without any changes which is incredibly practical for work and leisure purposes. However, this is no longer possible and the buses either go to Central or Oxford Street and no further. This then requires finding the nearest tram stop which is time consuming and an unnecessary step.

I am now forced to walk up the very steep hill near where I live to go to the tram stop in Randwick. Before the bus changes I walked down to Coogee and caught a bus (usually X74 and 374) all the way to the city. Walking up the hill as you get older and have a bad knee is a pain (literally) and will only get worse as one gets older. I am in my 60s but feel sorry for the much older people that have to do this. Catching the 374 to Randwick and walking to the tram involves a fairly long walk for an elderly person, someone with mobility issues etc.

Fortunately, I have retired recently otherwise I would have left work anyway as there is no way I could get onto a crowded tram and stand probably all the way – going to Coogee Beach to catch the bus to work ensured I got a seat on what used to be (before the pandemic) a very crowded and well used route.

Recently I attended an event in Elizabeth Street and got the 373 which stopped at Museum and then I walked to the venue but returning home involved walking in the rain to the Oxford Street stop whereas in the past many buses stopped on Elizabeth Street. I am now taking this difficulty into account and will probably no longer attend many CBD events in the evening.

The buses were cut in a cynical way to make sure people took the tram which does not go near many places people want to go and is incredibly slow. Therefore, privatisation will only make this worse as these routes will not be reinstated. The state Government pretended that no one used these buses as they quoted pandemic usage. I can attest to an incredible amount of bus usage pre pandemic which could have been complemented by the tram.

Randwick and Coogee do not have access to trains and therefore our buses were an integral part of our lives and we could get almost anywhere. I observed many disabled and elderly people using these services and am unable to understand how they will navigate the new routes as they do not have the physical ability to get on and off many different types of transport to get to the place they need to go which only took one bus in the past.

If the government wishes us to get back into the CBD and around the local area spending our money this is not the way to encourage it let alone the fact that most people need these services to access medical services and specialists. The previous buses went along Elizabeth Street close to Macquarie Street where many of these specialists, eye hospitals etc are. Not everyone can afford a taxi or an Uber.

If the tram breaks down it blocks the way meaning no other trams can go past and if the buses are cut then how will people get to where they need to go on time?

We pay our taxes to have the necessary services to enable us to get on with our lives in the best possible way and removing our public transport options is not right. I am aware that politicians have private cars and rarely catch public transport but their lack of empathy for the people who elected them is beyond my comprehension.

I believe that privatisation will make this current situation worse as it has done in the other areas where it has occurred. This will impact the environment (with more cars on the road) and people's basic rights to a competent and efficient public transport system.

Lesley Falvey