

**Submission
No 91**

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

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Submission to Inquiry into Buses

I appreciate the opportunity to express my views about the changes that have been made to bus services in the Eastern suburbs – there have been almost no improvements, and quite a number of disappointing reductions in the effectiveness of services.

I am a resident of Coogee and a very frequent user of bus services. I am a proud user of public transport whenever possible, despite having the means to take other forms of transport. My reasons for supporting public transport are:

- Environmental – minimising carbon emissions and keeping cars off the road (this is the main reason).
- Efficient use of time – if I'm driving a car or travelling in a taxi or uber, I can't do much except sit there. On public transport I can read or undertake other activities.
- Minimising my own costs (including parking).
- Avoiding the stress of driving in the city.
- Keeping public transport available for everyone – if people like me continue to use public transport, I hope it will remain available to others who have no other option.

I am passionate about all of this, and proud to know how to make my way around via public transport without resorting to driving.

I'll comment on each of the bus trips I frequently make, and how all of these trips have been negatively impacted in some way by the recent changes in the bus services.

Weekday travel for work – Coogee to Circular Quay

Monday to Friday I travel from Coogee to my office at Circular Quay, using the express buses. I am fortunate that from where I live I can catch either the 373x or 377x. I usually catch the 373x because it's more frequent, and in the evening the 373x's go a little later than the 377x's.

Two changes to the express buses have reduced the efficiency of this trip.

First, the location of the first stop for the express buses leaving the city – previously Spring St, now Castlereagh St near Martin Place. I previously had a 7-8 minute walk from Circular Quay to Spring St, and it's now a 13-14 minute walk to the first stop. And I walk pretty fast. Personally, the extra 6-7 minutes' walk doesn't bother me, most days (I appreciate getting a little more exercise). However if it's raining, or I'm carrying a lot of heavy material and/or not feeling great, the longer walk is a pain. And what about people who aren't as fit as me, or (for example) are disabled?

I tried a couple of alternatives to getting to the Castlereagh St stop, but they were both inefficient because they don't connect! They are:

- Light rail from Circular Quay. I have to wait for the light rail (extra time), and the light rail stop in George St is a fair way from the bus stop in Castlereagh St (extra time). So I ruled this option out very quickly.
- Catch a bus that leaves from Circular Quay (e.g. 333, 392) and get off at Martin Place. I thought this was a great idea until I discovered that these buses don't actually stop right on Martin Place any more – they go a little past it. To get down to the Castlereagh St, I have to first walk back (to

Martin Place) then down, or ahead (to King St) – in which case it's more efficient to walk to the second bus stop of the route. Once again, this adds to the time taken.

The second change to the express trip is the addition of the loop via Cowper and Cook Sts. This also adds time to the trip.

I should also comment on an improvement to the express bus timetable – there are more later options for coming home from the city in the evening. I appreciate this.

I also observe that, with the altered route, the traffic hold-ups to buses leaving the city are now much less frequent, and this is another improvement.

Travel home from the city in the evening after expresses have stopped

About once a fortnight I'm travelling home from the city in the evening – for instance, after a dinner or a concert in the city. This is the worst, and most frustrating, trip under the new bus arrangements. Largely because it's now at least a two-stage trip, often with a long wait in the middle. This is particularly frustrating late at night when everyone's tired.

Here, my trip starts by catching a 333 or a Maroubra bus that uses Anzac Parade, and wait for a 373 in Oxford St or Finders St. (The 333s are very frequent and often almost empty – a question in passing: why does Bondi get such great service?).

The first stage of the trip is usually fairly easy, due to the frequency of the 333 and Maroubra buses. But then we're waiting by the side of the road waiting for the next 373. Despite the 373 being a "high frequency" service, the gap between them is often quite long. I've waited up to 30 mins for a 373 on Oxford St – which is not fun, late at night. I've also had some short waits, but because the long wait is a possibility it's not a trip that appeals ("will we wait 5 mins or 30 mins tonight?" we ask ourselves).

A further frustration for this trip is that late at night the 373s usually don't have real-time data turned on (I'm not sure why this would be the case), so you have no idea when the next bus is coming. The only way you know for sure is when you see one heading along Oxford St towards the city – you know it's going to loop around and be back for you soon!

Last point is that I used to have two late-evening options – the 377 as well as 373 – but the 377 has sadly disappeared. Which means longer waits on average.

The frustrations of this trip are enough to make me consider a taxi or uber, which is against all my principles!

Travel to and from Bondi Junction

When I travel to Bondi Junction it's almost always for shopping. I don't shop very often, so I'm not as familiar with the current options here. Just a few comments.

There are now fewer options between Coogee and Maroubra and Bondi Junction – the 314, 316, 317 now having gone. Once again I'm fortunate, as I can still easily catch the 313. And I'm also not far

from the 350 (which is now my husband's favourite bus – this is a very handy route for our weekend travel).

Why don't I use the light rail?

With my frustrations about the bus travel, you may wonder why I don't use the light rail instead, where possible. There are three main reasons:

- The light rail is slow through the city, making ALL trips longer
- The light rail doesn't take me all the way home, so any trip using the light rail is a two-stage trip, involving a change to bus at Randwick Junction. If I walk home from the light rail, it's 22 minutes' walk – and I have done this in desperation on some occasions.
- Changing modes of transport is always frustrating. And the Randwick Junction light rail-bus interchange is very disappointing. There is no coordination between light rail and bus times. To get to the onwards buses, I have a short walk up to the lights, a wait for the lights to change (usually while watching one or two buses leave from the other side of the road), then another short walk up to the bus stop. Each stage of this three-step 'interchange' is another delay which gives me the opportunity to miss a bus. Very frustrating indeed.

Thoughts for improvement...

Could there be a proper interchange where the light rail and buses actually meet each other? I think this was the original plan, using High Cross Park, but I understand locals wanted to "save the park". Does anyone ever use this park? Answer: no. What a wasted opportunity!

Could there be some arrangement where – if a bus is pulling up at the stop at the Avoca St/Belmore Rd intersection, and a light rail is just arriving – the bus waits a couple of minutes for the people on the light rail?

In closing

All up, I've been frustrated and saddened by the changes in our bus services. And whenever I talk to friends, everyone feels the same way – we love our buses, and it's very frustrating when there have been so many changes for the worse.

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