

**Submission
No 133**

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

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Submission to the Upper House Inquiry into the Privatisation of Buses.

Paula Masselos

Public transport is a popular mode of transport in Waverley given we are so densely populated and congested. And we know our community has fought long and hard against bus cuts and the removal of bus stops.

Witness the fight for the 378 which saw promises made to reinstate this service – although 2 years on we are still waiting. – and the 361 which was popularly used by older residents to access health services at the War memorial hospital.

The cutting of the direct 378 service from Bronte to Central (original to the Quay), and replacing it with the 379 Bronte – Bondi – Bronte Service, means there is no direct route to access St Vincent's Hospital or the City. This means people have to get off at Bondi Junction Interchange and wait for another bus.

I have been told that this can add up to almost an extra hour of commuting. It also means funnelling even more people into an already congested and dangerous interchange where pedestrians, cars and buses are often in conflict. It was only 18 months ago that a female pedestrian lost her life when hit by a bus.

A privatised bus service will mean that useful but perhaps not at full bus capacity usage, bus routes will be cut. I don't understand why we are still paying taxes for services that will no longer be run by the state government. And surely there is a social contract to ensure that people should be able to move around their LGA in order to access services without too much hassle.

The privatisation of region 9 here in the Eastern Suburbs, due to commence in the first week of April, is of great concern.

We have witnessed the reduction of service levels in region 6 in the Inner West with buses no longer reliable, and new hire bus drivers are on reduced pay and conditions. It is a well known fact that private operators will have a profit incentive to cut costs and reduce service standards in order to make more money. And this is what has been experienced in Region 6.

Here in Region 9 we are already experiencing significant cuts in bus routes including the very popular 400. The member for Coogee has recorded more that 30 routes cut and about 50 bus stops removed. All to force people on to the loss making and slow light rail. For those of us who have felt the impact of bus route cuts but don't live next to the light rail, it is doubly difficult and time consuming to travel about the Eastern suburbs and into the City.

Our buses are slowly being removed out of the Waverley Bus Depot in preparation for the privatised service. I actually asked an officer of Sydney Buses if buses were being removed from our bus depot. And the answer was YES. So it doesn't take a genius to work out what's happening here. Over time, parts / all of the depot will be sold off and bus services further reduced. This mania for profit over services, and slavish privatisation ideology will only service to drive even further congestion. As the state government also pushes for high living densities and more high rise, public transport is set to play an even greater role in moving people around. I am unable to see how a privatised bus service will adequately respond to this challenge given current experience. So it begs the question – is the government shirking its responsibility here? Is it that only people with cars will be able to get to where they need to be? Is this push to privatisation leading to our elderly and most

vulnerable being forced into social isolation as it will be too difficult / too expensive to move around their suburbs?

After region 6 was privatised, there were many complaints about the service. I am sure it will be the case here too. As a supporter of public transport, and that fact I and Waverley Council is on the record working to protect our public transport, to stop the bus cuts and against privatisation, I want to know just what is happening once the services are privatised.

I am aware that Waverley council will be recording people's complaints about service levels once the privatised buses are introduced. Council has set up a dedicated email buscomplaints, a webpage to record complaints and the option of calling the Customer Service Centre.

Our public bus services are popular, well run, timely and useful. Over the last 2-3 years, we have been witnessing a steady attrition of services, routes, bus stops and quality of service, as the state government prepares for privatisation and to force people onto the light rail.

A once great service is now being cannibalised and diminished – all because of ideology, and need to refill the treasury coffers because of disastrous transport decisions.

Please bring back our public buses and stop privatisation.