

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Whilst I am primarily a driver as I basically can't carry things and accessibility is an issue with public transport (I have frequent issues with walking, regularly needing splints and crutches), there are times I need to use public transport as other options are too expensive as a pensioner and timing does not often fit with getting friends or NDIS workers to provide transport; a key example of this happened on a wet night in December 2021, just after we lost our local buses. I needed to go to Emergency at POWH, where I was admitted for nearly a week (cut short by a couple of days due to childcare issues; joint medical and psychiatric admission), and there was no transport to Avoca St or Barker St, and the alleged bus stop near High St wasn't outside the hospital and was unsuitable as Emergency is on the Barker St side and the hospital doors are closed when night shift starts. I didn't call an ambulance given whilst requiring admission, it wasn't a clear emergency (though given I'd had no sleep for over 40hrs I may not have been thinking clearly). I don't know how I managed it, but I somehow walked stop/start from St Catherine's to the emergency department, leaving me in agony for days/weeks from flare my chronic physical conditions (basically having to rest constantly and barely able to do anything requiring even walking), and arriving at emergency in severe pain, with high blood pressure, breathless and the next day I nearly passed out just sitting on the shower chair on the ward due to the pain. If the usual buses had been operating I could've accessed the medical care without the significant adverse health impacts. I was not fit to drive with that level of sleep deprivation, and my friends either had kids at home or the one minding my son doesn't drive. Parking near the hospital, especially for more than a couple of hours, isn't feasible especially on a pension, even if I had been fit to drive. The removal of access to healthcare because of the removal of public transport is completely unacceptable.

Additionally, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and my son commencing yr10 I was intending to get him back on the bus for commuting between school and home, though the standard concession ticket is expensive on a pension, however to my knowledge there's no buses from Waverley to Randwick Town Hall anymore, so I have no choice but to drive my son; the Special Purpose school he attends doesn't have a school bus. This delays his development of independence, as well as impacting the climate and finances.

I'm lucky I can usually drive to my frequent medical appointments with various specialists at POWH, and that I'm familiar with the short cuts and lanes within the hospital from when I used to work there, however I have friends and neighbours who don't drive and don't know how they'll get to outpatient appointments anymore, especially those with reduced mobility such as from pinched spinal nerves. The East is not just populated by people who are wealthy, drivers, or tourists, and we need our regular and reliable buses back for not just psycho-social reasons, but also for access to basic services such as healthcare.