

4 July 2017

The Hon Gladys Berejiklian
Premier of NSW
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

The Privatization of Glebe and Forest Lodge Bus Services

Dear Premier,

The Glebe Society is a long standing community group representing the interests of over 400 members in Glebe and Forest Lodge. We write on behalf of our members to express our concerns about the NSW Government's recently announced decision to privatize the bus services in Glebe and Forest Lodge.

We understand that the Government is proposing to engage a private operator for Region 6, one of the four Sydney metropolitan bus regions presently operated by the State Transit Authority. Over 200 bus routes in the Inner West and South West of Sydney will be affected, including the routes 431, 433 and 470 that serve Glebe and Forest Lodge. The 370 bus route which operates both inside and outside Region 6 may also be affected.

Why are the Bus Services being Privatized? What Benefits will accrue to the Community?

We would like to know the reasons for the Government's decision to privatise these bus routes and to know what benefits will accrue to the community from this. We consider that the present Glebe and Forest Lodge bus services are satisfactory and in general meet the needs of our community. We would like to know what the Government sees as the failings of these services and why is it thought necessary for a private operator to be involved for these failings to be addressed, rather than the State Transit Authority simply working to improve the services.

We understand that the Minister has cited the number of complaints regarding the bus services as the reason for the decision to engage a private operator. This seems to mean that the Government expects that privatizing the bus services will result in improved services and so fewer complaints. We would like to know in what ways it is expected the bus services will be improved under a private operator and how the community will benefit.

Our concern is Services could Deteriorate and Bus Fares Increase.

We are in fact concerned that privatising the bus routes will mean a decline in services for our community in Glebe and Forest Lodge. We are concerned that once the bus services are not operated by the Government, but by a private operator, some of the off peak times in the schedules and possibly the services themselves will be dropped where they are not considered

to be profitable for the operator to run. Given that many people in Glebe and Forest Lodge, including many disabled people, are dependent on buses to get to where they want to go (to the shops, to the doctor, to hospital and so on) and often travel outside peak hours, this is a matter of real concern.

Further, because profitability will be the driving factor for private operators, we are concerned that upward pressure will be put on bus fares. In May 2016 IPART made recommendations to the Government on the maximum public transport fares that should apply in Sydney from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019 with increases recommended to the daily cap for seniors. We are concerned that significant increases in bus fares may occur after 30 June 2019 once private sector operators are involved and that the daily cap for seniors may be removed.

We Seek your Assurance on Services and Fares

Accordingly, we seek your assurance that the Government will require the private operator of bus Region 6 to maintain the current bus services (including the 431, 433 and 470 services to Glebe and Forest Lodge) and to maintain the current frequency of those services. We also seek your assurance that the Government will continue to subsidize these bus services and will not seek to impose the real cost of these services on consumers through increases in public transport fares.

We consider that public transport is a key component in Sydney's transport network. We think it is critical that public transport services are maintained at a high standard to encourage their use and discourage the use of motor vehicles where public transport is available. If the bus services to Glebe and Forest Lodge deteriorate under a private operator this is likely to encourage the unnecessary use of motor vehicles and will have an adverse impact on many Glebe and Forest Lodge residents who are dependent on a frequent and reliable bus service. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allan Hogan', written in a cursive style.

Allan Hogan
President