



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Private Members' Statements

23 October 2018

WALLSEND ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (13:04):

Opal trips are still falling on Newcastle buses, according to reporting from the Newcastle Herald.

Nine months after sweeping changes to bus routes and timetables caused chaos for Wallsend residents and commuters, people are still staying off public transport.

Senior and pensioner Opal trips are down 4.5 per cent over the September quarter as compared to last year, and any gains in full-fare adult riders were cancelled out by a year-on-year fall in school student travel—there were forty-five thousand fewer student trips on the Keolis Downer network in 2018.

Of course, Newcastle public transport was privatised by this government in July 2017. Once the private operator took control, network reliability and worker conditions dipped considerably. After the network changes in January, my office was flooded with complaints.

All year, I have relayed these concerns to the private provider, to the Minister for Transport and to this Chamber—my Hunter colleagues and I have presented two petitions carrying ten thousand signatures for debate. I have given notices of motion, questions on notice and private members statements on the matter.

There were some minor changes to the network in July, and I happily admit that some of the alterations have been positive, but the horror stories from my constituents keep coming in.

Deidre wrote of the need for a direct route from Broadmeadow Road like the old 226 service. She wrote:

“My son stopped catching the bus into town as it took longer from Broadmeadow to the ferry wharf than the 136 from Stockton to Medowie! Makes no sense at all... he now relies on his service provider to drop him in.”

Amanda wrote about how she's had to stop taking public transport altogether:

"I've given the 14 the flick and back to driving into CBD. I do not need to go on a worldwide tour of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle to get to work. I could deal with a 50 minute trip from Belmont North, but now it's 90mins with the additional walk time factored in. If I drive 45mins tops in Peak traffic."

In the western suburbs, the problems are even more pronounced. Two examples really highlight the issues in the Wallsend area. Dave wrote:

"I quite often have to go to the Hunter Sports Centre for an evening athletic meet and have to catch two buses to get back to Wallsend after 6.30 at night. 13 into the hospital then 23 home or take the 13 into town then 12 out making a trip that would normally take 10-15 mins up to an hour or more depending on connections."

If Dave runs from the Hunter Sports Centre after practice, he might get lucky and catch the 46 bus which will get him to Wallsend in half an hour—but if he's held up even about five minutes, he has to catch the 13 at 6:41pm and change over to the 23, for a total trip time of just over an hour; the 7:15 13 means he has to change to the 26 to get home, for a trip time of fifty-five minutes.

It takes ten minutes to drive from Hunter Sports Centre to Wallsend via Lake Road, and fifteen minutes or so via Jubilee Road. It takes an hour and eight minutes to walk that distance.

Maryland resident Kara-Lee said on Facebook:

"If my kids want to go to Charlestown, Glendale or Kotara it takes them two buses. Which means they either have to wait up to an hour at Jesmond or Wallsend at night to get another bus. It's horrible and not safe. If I want to get to the hospital from here it takes me two buses. And takes over an hour to get from Maryland to Rankin Park!"

For the benefit of those who may not be familiar with Wallsend and its environs, to get from Kara-Lee's area to the major shopping centres at Charlestown, Glendale and Kotara by car, it takes twenty minutes, fourteen minutes and twenty-one minutes, respectively.

To get to Glendale by bus takes forty-nine minutes, including at least one service change; a bus trip to Charlestown takes one hour, six minutes with a service change; and a trip to Westfield Kotara takes one hour and ten minutes, with at least one bus change.

It only takes about half an hour more to walk to these shopping centres from Maryland.

The delay between Maryland and the hospital is inexcusable, especially given the well-documented parking and traffic problems around the John Hunter Hospital campus.

All year, when I have brought forward complaints about bus services in Wallsend they have been ignored. Now, furnished with specifics and hard comparisons, I ask the Minister to engage with these issues.

Wallsend residents and commuters deserve better.