

Slippery road of high parking fees and excessive tolls

Paul Nicolaou



Sydney motorists must feel their cars have become mobile ATMs dispensing wads of revenue to toll road operators and into bulging government and council coffers.

And this is happening as the demonising of cars, using the blunt instrument of ever-increasing fees and charges, gathers momentum.

Even Sydney's magnificent skyline and harbour have become a "pay-per-view" affair with the popular foreshore road around Mrs Macquarie's Chair subject to 24-hour metered parking at \$9 an hour.

Premier Chris Minns, NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey and Minister for Roads John Graham

have at least recognised the problem in their first Budget with the \$561 million "return-to-spender" scheme that will cap weekly toll payments at \$60 for an estimated 720,000 toll road account holders.

But motorists know that for years they've been squeezed into fewer traffic lanes, lost more and more kerbside parking, been dragooned into using expensive toll roads and paid punitive fees at off-street parking stations.

Kerbside parking in the CBD, when you can find it, is going at a premium of more than \$30 for a four-hour stay. Parking stations can cost as much as \$90 for the same period.

Even the leisure hours of Sydney motorists are being hit hard.

Look at the northern beaches where parking at a Palm Beach reserve, for example, costs \$10 an hour or \$40 per day.

It begs the question, how can the bulk of Sydney families afford

imposts of this kind? The simple answer is that they can't but does anyone care? Why should they be shut out of their city?

There was a time when parking time limits and charges had more to do with achieving equitable access to the scarce resource of available space.

Now, it seems more and more ideologically driven where the car is the enemy in spite of the fact that Sydneysiders make rational choices when they choose to use their cars with the enjoyment and independence that goes with it.

Such high charges clearly discriminate against society's battlers. The well off can shrug off high motoring costs as a mere inconvenience and motor on regardless. It's another thing entirely for those on modest incomes.

The battlers have watched charges going up at the same time as we've driven headlong into a massive cost of living crisis with high fuel costs,

crippling energy prices and high interest rates.

Any suggestion that the battlers can simply use public transport doesn't hold water either.

It is not as though the public transport system is providing the reliability that is needed.

Remember the fiasco when a downpour turned the Elton John concert into a transport nightmare? Or the rail meltdown after the Matildas-England match during the FIFA Women's World Cup?

And it makes even less sense when public transport — rail and bus in particular — are prone to sudden cancellations due to staff shortages and, on occasions, complete meltdowns of the system.

As The Daily Telegraph recently reported, nearly 16 per cent of all rail services were cancelled in the 2023 financial year, a five-year high.

The number of bus service cancellations are notoriously high,

with the Minns Government inheriting an acute bus driver shortage. Many Sydney people still regard car travel as a right, not a privilege, but at every turn their choice is being made more difficult.

Unfortunately, our city has suffered from an unimaginative approach to traffic management.

It remains bewildering that Allianz Stadium at Moore Park was built without a car park and that this design deficiency is only now on the way to being remedied.

Business Sydney always thought car use should have been considered.

It is why we advocate for an underground car park below the current open space west of Anzac Parade. It could serve the dual purpose of supporting events in the Moore Park precinct and providing space for people to park before venturing into the city.

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