



## COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SUPERANNUANTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Founded 1931. Celebrating 75 years of service in 2006.  
Serving pensioners of all ages, superannuants and low-income retirees.

*Consumer Protection Awards – 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005*

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# MEDIA RELEASE

Immediate release

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4 August 2006

### **Pensioners support NSW Opposition's CountryLink policy**

“Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association (CPSA) supports the NSW Opposition's policy to abolish the booking fee on Pensioner Travel Vouchers”, said CPSA State Secretary Bob Jay today.

“CPSA estimates that Countrylink patronage would drop by 50 per cent as a result of the introduction of the booking fee for Pensioner Travel Vouchers.

“This is confirmed by the fact that patronage has dropped 20 per cent in the first three months of operation. These were autumn and winter months when pensioners do not travel as much as they do during summer and spring.

“The reduction in patronage of CountryLink services by pensioners is set to continue, possibly beyond 50 per cent.

“Not only does the NSW Government make money out of pensioners still travelling on Pensioner Travel Vouchers, which are supposed to be free, the reduction in patronage also means that it pays millions of dollars less in subsidies to CountryLink.

“It's part of strategy to save money and get rid of CountryLink as we know it.

“CPSA was appalled when the NSW Government introduced a booking fee of 15 per cent (or a minimum of \$10) for Countrylink travel using Pensioner Travel Vouchers. Pensioners can use up to four vouchers each year to cover four one-way journeys.

“It’s something that’s hit hard the estimated 200,000 pensioners in NSW who use Pensioner Travel Vouchers each year. These are people who are subsisting on incomes of less than \$13,000 a year.

“A booking fee of \$20 or \$30 on a return trip stops them from visiting friends and relatives. The NSW Government stands condemned of causing a massive personal and social impact in the lives of 200,000 pensioners, who have worked hard all their lives and paid their taxes.

“No other CountryLink passengers pay a booking fee at any time. Only pensioners are made to pay to get them off the trains.

“Half of all CountryLink travel is done by pensioners. Every year pensioners use about half a million Pensioner Travel Vouchers.

“So the Government is upsetting an estimated 200,000 pensioners who use half a million Pensioner Travel Vouchers to make a measly \$5 million a year.

“It’s part of the NSW Government’s plan of getting rid of CountryLink. Get patronage down progressively and cancel services progressively.

“Already the NSW Government has replaced half the Countrylink trains with buses. Only the main train lines are left and that’s because the NSW Government is developing the main north- and southbound tracks for lucrative freight rail contracts.

“The next bit could be to cut back the CountryLink daily Dubbo rail service, or, maybe the NSW Government will get rid of one of the two daily services to Melbourne.

“The NSW Government keeps saying it is “refurbishing” the XPTs. What this really means is that XPTs are being continuously patched up. No planning has been done to date to replace the XPT fleet, which is already beyond its economic life span.

<b>RETURN SYDNEY TO:</b>	<b>BOOKING FEE FIRST CLASS</b>	<b>BOOKING FEE ECONOMY</b>
Canberra	\$22.80	\$20.00
Cootamundra	\$29.70	\$21.50
Griffith	\$40.60	\$29.40
Melbourne	\$52.50	\$37.30
Dubbo	\$31.00	\$22.40
Broken Hill	\$55.10	\$39.90

