



Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF)
Position Paper

Accessing Major Events

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Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) is a national, Member-funded CEO forum, advocating the public policy interests of the 200 most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian tourism, transport, aviation & investment sectors.

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In short

1. Major events are an important part of the sporting and cultural life of Australia.
2. Public transport offers the most efficient means of accessing major events for patrons whilst minimising the impact on traffic in the vicinity of venues.
3. The experience of the Sydney Olympics shows that integrated public transport ticketing for major events is the most effective way to provide seamless access to events.
4. More can be done to encourage event organisers to implement integrated ticketing as a means of promoting public transport use and offsetting the extra costs associated with providing transport and traffic management for major events.

Public transport and major events

Much of the focus of public transport policy and planning is focused on improving services for work-related trips. Governments and transport authorities have also recognised the role of public transport in serving other community and economic needs including the tourism market and, the focus of this paper, access to major events.

Major events are an important part of the sporting and cultural life of Australia. They include sporting events, festivals, cultural events, concerts and large community events such as the annual agricultural shows held in most capital cities. Major events are also an important contributor to the national economy. For example, in 2006 major events attracted 324,000 international visitors to Victoria generating an estimated \$1.2 billion in economic activity for the state economy. An event like the Australian Open tennis championship attracts over 500,000 people, which include approximately 35,000 international and interstate visitors.¹

Major events are held at a variety of venues, including stadia, entertainment and performance centres, showgrounds, racecourses and at street festivals. Australian capital cities are served by 19 sporting venues with a capacity of over 30,000² and there are countless other venues and ad hoc precincts capable of hosting event crowds in excess of 10,000 attendees.

Most major event venues can be accessed by public transport, either through regular or special event services. Some larger venues, like Sydney Olympic Park, were constructed with public transport infrastructure included as an integral part of their development. Others, like Australia's highest capacity stadium, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, are served by existing rail and tram infrastructure.

¹ Victoria Events Industry Council, http://www.vecci.org.au/VEIC/Policy_Advocacy_and_Representation/Documents/policy+statement+-+value+of+events.pdf accessed 19 September 2011.

² Austadiums, <http://www.austadiums.com/stadiums> accessed 19 September, 2011.

However, public transport usage can vary considerably for different venues. For example, the public transport mode share for major events at Sydney Olympic Park averaged 55% in 2010 while only 5 to 20% of those attending events at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the Sydney Football Stadium utilised bus services provided to the Moore Park precinct.

Factors influencing public transport usage for major events include traffic congestion at event venues, the accessibility and frequency of public transport and the availability and cost of car parking.

State transport departments have recognised the desirability of increasing the mode share of public transport for major events. Those benefits include:

- the capacity of public transport to quickly move the large number of people attending events;
- reduced traffic congestion at and in the vicinity of event venues;
- the broader environmental benefits of reduced car usage; and
- minimised customer frustration caused by the costs and delays associated with car travel and parking at events.

The provision of adequate public transport, including additional special event services, is the most important mechanism used by transport authorities to reduce reliance on private motor vehicle usage. Particularly since its successful deployment at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, transport departments have also recognised that integrated ticketing for major events can play a major role in encouraging event-goers to use public transport, and to meet the costs associated with special event public transport services.

Integrated public transport ticketing for the Sydney Olympics

The Sydney 2000 Olympics provided the impetus for integrated ticketing for major events in New South Wales. The Olympics represented the largest event of its kind in the state's history and the task of transporting spectators, athletes and games officials required a significant expansion of services on Sydney's public transport system. During the course of the games a total of 4.7 million people travelled to Sydney Olympic Park³ with 3.5 million travelling by train to the Homebush precinct⁴.

Integrated ticketing for the games was a central component of transport planning for games venues. In 1998, public transport was promoted for the first Royal Easter Show at its new Homebush home for what was the first trial for transport planning at the precinct. A Showlink ticket incorporating both the entry price and transport costs on Sydney's public transport system proved popular with show-goers.

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) was hesitant about the adoption of integrated ticketing for all games events. As the official report on the games reported:

³ Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, *Official Report of the XXVII Olympiad, Volume One: Preparing for the Games*, 2001 p167.

⁴ *Ibid.* p159.

“SOCOG had been concerned that ticket prices were already high and would not sell well if a transport levy were added. ORTA’s [Olympic Roads and Transport Authority] view that integrated ticketing was operationally essential prevailed.”⁵

SOCOG’s initial concerns persist with some venue and event operators to this day. It is worth noting that the 2000 games had the highest ticket sales in Olympic history up to that time and the inclusion of transport costs proved little deterrent for spectators.

The success of integrated ticketing at the Olympic Games led to concerted efforts by the NSW Department of Transport to promote its use at subsequent major events at Homebush.

Integrated ticketing: enhancing customer service

Integrated ticketing for major events works, in summary, by:

- including the cost of public transport in the price of an event ticket; and
- permitting event-goers to use their event ticket to access public transport to and from the event venue.

The additional cost of public transport is included in the price of all tickets sold for an event and is not dependent on whether a ticket-holder actually uses public transport. This provides a direct incentive for event-goers to use public transport. It also means that, in most cases, the public transport component is offered at a discounted price for those that utilise this option.

Generally, an integrated ticket offers unlimited travel on regular or special event public transport services for the day of the event or for a specified period before, during and after the event.

Benefits

TTF believes integrated ticketing provides considerable benefits for transport authorities, the broader community, event organisers and consumers.

For transport authorities and the broader community, integrated ticketing provides a mechanism for the partial or full cost recovery of additional transport services provided for major events. By encouraging a modal shift to public transport, traffic congestion in the vicinity and on the approaches to venues can be reduced.

For event organisers, integrated ticketing encourages enhanced coordination of transport services, reduces traffic congestion at the venue and can be an additional selling point for tickets. Where special public transport services are provided, the cost is most often met – at the very least in part – by event organisers or venues. Integrated ticketing provides event organisers and venues the opportunity to offset some or all of the cost associated with special transport and traffic management arrangements.

For customers, integrated ticketing offers what can be considerable discounts on the regular costs of public transport, allows a seamless single ticket experience and potentially shorter travel times. For consumers, transport authorities and venues, integrated ticketing alleviates queuing at stations and on-board trams and buses as event patrons are usually only required to show an event ticket in order to use public transport to and from the event.

⁵ Ibid.

The variable uptake of integrated ticketing outlined in detail throughout this paper points to the need for event organisers to better recognise the benefits for their customers. Western Australia has shown that determined marketing and effort can produce what is Australia's most widely-adopted integrated ticketing model.

While it should be a last resort, there is a clear public policy justification for states to legislatively require integrated ticketing for very large events if other mechanisms fail to ensure a more comprehensive uptake.

Recommendations:

- *State governments, on behalf of event-goers renew efforts to promote the benefits of integrated ticketing to event organisers; and*
- *State governments consider a legislative basis for integrated major event ticketing if other mechanisms fail to ensure comprehensive participation by large events and venue operators.*

Public transport and major events in Australia

Every mainland Australian state provides the opportunity for event organisers and venues to offer integrated ticketing. There is some variance in the cost and structure of each state scheme and considerable difference in the uptake of integrated ticketing, which is analysed further in this paper. For example, in 2011 WA will have over 100 events that participate in that state's integrated ticketing system while in Victoria just four events will utilise its very similar scheme. In NSW, integrated ticketing is well established for events at Sydney Olympic Park and ANZ Stadium whereas, this year, no events at the Moore Park precinct will offer customers an integrated ticket.

The reluctance of some major event organisers to adopt integrated ticketing appears to emanate from two factors. First, a concern that the additional cost associated with an integrated ticket will deter potential customers. Second, that integrated ticketing may affect revenue at those venues offering paid parking to event-goers.

There appears to be no empirical basis for the first concern. Venues that offer integrated ticketing have not lost patronage and indeed the transport savings on offer to customers can be seen as an additional selling point. Some event organisers also use integrated ticketing to promote the environmental credentials of the event. TTF believes venues that refuse to offer integrated ticketing to protect car parking revenue do so at the cost of both their customers and the broader community.

Western Australia

Western Australia is one of the few Australian states with an established history of institutionalised integrated transport planning. The Public Transport Authority (PTA) has been a leader in ticketing and was the first State to introduce multi-modal tickets and was the first jurisdiction to adopt smartcard technology.

It has been the most successful State in adopting and promoting integrated ticketing for major events during the last decade. TTF contends that the West Australian model is an exemplar for all jurisdictions.

Current Arrangements

Transperth, a division of the PTA, administers integrated ticketing in Perth. Integrated ticketing is used for a wide range of sporting, cultural and special events. These include soccer, AFL, rugby union and cricket matches, major concerts and music festivals, the Perth City to Surf and special events like the visit of the Dalai Lama and the Mundaring Truffle Festival. Major venues served by integrated ticketing include the WACA, NIB Stadium, Paterson Stadium (Subiaco Oval), the Claremont Showgrounds and the Burswood Dome. In 2011, Transperth will have provided integrated ticketing for over 100 events.

Additional features of the Western Australian system include:

- Transperth operates on a direct cost recovery basis for transport services provided to major events.
- Integrated ticketing is generally available for events attracting more than 5,000 participants.⁶
- Two options are available to event organisers: joint ticketing or flat costs.
- Joint ticketing is Transperth's preferred approach and the simplest system.
 - Event organisers are charged a fixed fee (currently \$2.20 per ticket) for every ticket issued to an event. As in other states, ticketholders who travel by modes other than public transport effectively offset the costs of those who use the public transport system.
 - It is at the discretion of event organisers as to how this charge is funded – whether through an additional amount attached to the ticket price or absorbed by the organisers through alternative sources.
 - Tickets for the event cover both access to the public transport system and the event itself. In addition to paper tickets, event organisers are able to use other innovative solutions such as race bibs for the City to Surf and wrist bands for events like music festivals.
 - Tickets permit travel on all Transperth services three hours before, during and three hours after the event.
- With the flat cost model the event organiser is charged for the cost of additional transport services provided for the event. The charge does not include the cost of regular Transperth services and event patrons pay the normal scheduled fair for public transport usage.
- For large scale events that require significant supplementary bus services, or for bike events, additional charges may be levied.

Integrated event ticketing has been embraced by event organisers without the need for legislative compulsion and is now widely accepted. The minimum threshold of 5,000 attendees has allowed a broad range of events to take advantage of the integrated ticketing system

⁶ It is important to note the PTA will provide integrated ticketing to events below 5,000 attendees and this threshold is provided as a guide to event organisers.

New South Wales

As outlined previously, the 2000 Sydney Olympics set a resounding precedent for the provision on integrated public transport for other major events in NSW. In 2004, all tickets for the Royal Easter Show incorporated public transport access and costs. In the same year, ANZ Stadium introduced integrated ticketing for several major sporting events including the State of Origin, international rugby union tests and the NRL Grand Final. In 2005, AFL games at Homebush followed suit.

In 2005 the NSW government considered introducing legislation to provide a legislative basis for integrated ticketing for major events. The legislation was abandoned following criticism by some venue operators and media outlets that the legislative regime would have imposed a 'tax' on people attending sporting and cultural events.

Current arrangements

Integrated tickets have largely been used for events at ANZ Stadium (Sydney Olympic Park) including for the State of Origin, NRL Grand Final, rugby union tests, Swans and Super Rugby games and for some concert events. Integrated ticketing is also provided for the Royal Easter Show, the City to Surf, the Sydney Running Festival and the Future Music Festival at Randwick Racecourse. In 2010, 1.7 million customers travelled to and from events in Sydney using an integrated ticket.

The NSW system has the following features:

- Transport for NSW negotiates with event organisers and venues on a case-by-case basis. Costs are determined by the nature of the event and the additional public transport services that are required for that event.
- Ticket pricing is considered commercial-in-confidence and hence figures for the additional transport costs are not publicly available.
- Integrated ticketing is primarily used for large events that require additional transport services.
- The cost is based on the level of transport required for the estimated crowd numbers. Transport for NSW undertakes an analysis of historical data such as mode share, arrival patterns and the geographic origin of patrons in determining the nature of additional services to a venue.
- Venues and organisers are charged based on the negotiated rate. It is left to the discretion of event organisers as to if and how the additional transportation charge is levied on ticket holders.
- Integrated tickets are flash tickets. Generally the event ticket will include a statement that public transport is included in the price. In addition to paper tickets, Transport for NSW has allowed runners bibs to be used as the 'ticket' for events like the City to Surf.
- Integrated tickets allow a ticketholder to travel on all Cityrail services, regular Sydney buses (State Transit Authority) and Sydney Ferries services as well as any special event bus services operating for the event. The ticket is valid for the day of the event.
- Integrated tickets are not valid on privately operated transport services such as the private bus network, the Manly Fast Ferry services or on Sydney light rail.

Opportunities for expansion

There would be merit in Transport for NSW exploring options to make the system simpler and more attractive for smaller events (noting that the threshold in Victoria is as few as 500 participants). This could be achieved by offering integrated tickets at a common price for events that do not require additional transport services (or minimal additional services). A set charge for all tickets for an event, which results in savings for commuters who opt to use public transport, would make the system more attractive to event organisers. The Victorian and West Australian models are examples of this approach.

Recommendation: *Transport for NSW should explore ways of making the integrated ticketing system more attractive for smaller and medium size events, for example by offering a common price to events that do not require additional transport services. The price, levied across all tickets, should be calculated so as to offer considerable savings on the regular travel cost of public transport to the event.*

At present, major event tickets are valid only on Sydney's government-run public transport modes. The inclusion of privately operated transport modes, such as light rail and privately operated buses would improve access and create a more seamless experience for commuters.

Recommendation: *That Transport for NSW negotiates with private passenger transport operators to extend the coverage of major event integrated tickets.*

Major event integrated ticketing is well established for events at ANZ Stadium and other large events like the Royal Easter Show and the City to Surf. In light of the clear benefits of integrated public transport ticketing for major events, government should seek to promote the uptake of integrated tickets at all major events across the metropolitan area.

Transport authorities can, however, only do so much as there is no legislative basis for compelling event organisers to provide integrated tickets. The onus therefore lies with venue operators and event organisers to recognise the benefits of integrated ticketing for their patrons.

While ANZ Stadium has embraced integrated ticketing, the operators of the stadia in the Moore Park precinct have been less enthusiastic. The Sydney Cricket Ground and the Sydney Football Stadium, both operated by the SCG Trust, have a combined capacity of nearly 90,000. While STA buses serve the precinct from Central Station for major events, the majority of ticket holders at Moore Park venues travel by motor vehicle. The ensuing congestion on road approaches and in the vicinity of Moore Park during major events is considerable, inconveniencing both those attending sporting events and other road users.

There is a compelling case for the SCG Trust to support integrated ticketing for major events at its facilities. This will become particularly relevant if light rail is extended past the Moore Park precinct, as is currently proposed. A reluctance to do so is ultimately disadvantaging both its own patrons and the surrounding community.

Recommendation: *The SCG Trust and the NSW government should work to ensure that integrated ticketing is provided for major events at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the Sydney Football Stadium.*

Victoria

Melbourne is often described as the sporting capital of Australia and attracts internationally significant events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and the Australian Open. Home of the AFL and international cricket in Victoria, the MCG is Australia's largest stadium with a capacity of 100,000 spectators.

The Victorian government has also been successful in attracting major cultural events, musicals and conventions to Melbourne and has international-standard facilities for these events. Melbourne has a well-developed public transport network including Australia's second largest heavy rail system and the world's largest tram network.⁷

The Victorian Department of Transport has an established policy designed to encourage integrated ticketing for major events and conferences not dissimilar to the scheme in operation in Western Australia. However, the uptake of integrated ticketing by event organisers and venues is one of the lowest in Australia.

Current Arrangements

Despite an attractive and simple policy permitting integrated ticketing, only a few events have participated in the scheme. In 2011, for example, just four events intend to use major event ticketing. These include Equitana Asia Pacific at the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds, the popular St Jerome's Laneway Festival and later in 2011 the Royal Melbourne Show and the City2Sea running event. In a related scheme, tickets for the Australian Open and the grand prix include use of a free tram shuttle service to Melbourne and Albert Parks.

The Victorian system has the following features:

- Integrated ticketing is available, with the approval of the Director of Public Transport, for events catering for more than 500 people per day.
- The system is geared towards the use of scheduled public transport services.
- Events must be at an approved venue in or close to the Melbourne CBD.
- Events must not start before 9.30 am or between 4.00 and 6.00 pm to avoid peak hour congestion.
- The event ticket provides unlimited travel across both Melbourne transport zones on the day of the event and operates as a flash ticket. The DoT also permits the use of non-paper tickets such as event wrist-bands and running bibs (for example, for the City2Sea).
- The DoT charges \$2.60 per ticket across all tickets for an event. Ticketholders who travel by modes other than public transport effectively offset the costs of those who use the public transport system. For those who use public transport, this price represents a 77 per cent discount on the regular price of \$10.60 for a daily ticket (for both zones 1 and 2).

⁷ Metlink, *Submission to the East-West Link Needs Assessment* (2007) p69

- The fee covers the cost of scheduled public transport services. Additional fees would be levied by the DoT for events that require supplementary transport services for an event.

Opportunities for expansion

With a strong public transport network and major venues well served by train, tram or bus, the very limited participation by major sporting codes and event organisers is difficult to understand.

For major events the modest fee of \$2.60 per ticket should not serve as a cost deterrent for event attendees. For those who use public transport, an integrated ticket has the potential to offer considerable savings on regular ticket prices. The unwillingness of event organisers to utilise the major event ticketing system encourages greater usage of private motor vehicles with the ensuing traffic congestion that affects both those travelling to venues and the broader community. Event-goers using public transport are denied the savings and seamless travel that integrated ticketing offers.

What stands out about the current situation in Victoria is the reluctance, to date, of the AFL and the promoters of the Australian Open and grand prix to offer their spectators integrated ticketing.

Recommendation: *That the AFL and the organisers of other major sporting events embrace integrated ticketing at venues such as the MCG, Etihad Stadium, Melbourne Park, and Albert Park. On behalf of spectators, the Victorian government should renew efforts to encourage operators and venues to participate in the state's integrated event ticketing system.*

Queensland

Major events in Brisbane, like in most states, are dominated by sporting events at its larger stadia Suncorp Stadium (capacity 52,500) and the Gabba (42,000). Public transport mode share for events at these stadia are among the highest in Australia – 80 per cent and 48 per cent respectively. Large crowds of Queenslanders regularly attend events such as NRL, State of Origin, international rugby and cricket, V8 Supercars as well as music festivals.

In recent years, the establishment of NRL and AFL teams based on the Gold Coast has created new transport planning challenges for patrons travelling to and from both Skilled Park (capacity 27,500) and Metricon Stadium (25,000). Anecdotal evidence suggests the public transport mode share for these venues is also high (as much as 80 per cent), despite a variable take-up of integrated ticketing by event organisers.

The successful use of integrated event ticketing in Queensland (particularly at Suncorp Stadium and the Gabba) is largely attributed to the adoption of the Sydney model when Olympic soccer matches were held in Brisbane during the 2000 games. The same model was used subsequently for the 2003 Rugby World Cup. While integrated ticketing plays a major role in relatively high public transport mode shares for major events in Queensland, the importance of regulatory requirements such as restricted parking around venues and the development of traffic and transport management plans for major events cannot be understated.

Current arrangements:

- Integrated ticketing arrangements are in place for events at Suncorp Stadium and the Gabba via long-standing commercial agreements between the stadia and Brisbane Transport and Queensland Rail.
- TransLink holds integrated ticketing agreements with Skilled Park, Metricon Stadium, Brisbane Tennis Centre and V8 Supercars. These are implemented on a case by case basis.
- Operational arrangements are in place between TransLink and Stadiums Queensland for the provision of special services for certain events. Extra services are provided on a full cost recovery basis by TransLink, with the cost borne by event organisers dependent on the provision of an integrated ticket and whether the event attracts government sponsorship.
- Declared major events must submit a traffic and transport management plan to TransLink to demonstrate measures taken to minimise any adverse impact on regular public transport and traffic flows.
- TransLink will then provide an estimated cost for the provision of extra or modified services. These costs are one factor taken into consideration by event organisers and/or stadia when deciding whether or not to implement integrated ticketing, and the quantum of a public transport levy on each ticket.

Opportunities for expansion:

The variable implementation of integrated ticketing by event organisers and stadia, whilst not directly impacting upon public transport mode share, creates inequitable outcomes in the funding of transport for major events. Rather than being covered by a user-pays levy, the cost is either borne by event promoters, stadium managers or government when an integrated ticket is not offered. For example, by not offering integrated ticketing, Metricon Stadium must subsidise the implementation of its traffic and transport management plan. As discussed earlier, TTF believes the perceived cost deterrent of a public transport levy on each ticket is unfounded.

Recommendation: *Event organisers and stadium management authorities must embrace integrated ticketing in order to improve the cost recovery of transport provided for major events. Government and TransLink must also actively promote the implementation of integrated ticketing for major events and venues not currently offering it.*

Existing integrated ticketing and transport arrangements for major events provide a solid blueprint to apply to other events that may not already have optimal transport arrangements in place. The most obvious of these is Brisbane's annual agricultural show, the Ekka. More than 500,000 people visit the 10 day show each year, however to date, organisers have deemed the imposition of an integrated ticket too prohibitive to potential visitors. Considering this event attracts the equivalent of 10 consecutive sell-out crowds at Suncorp Stadium, there is a strong argument for mandatory integrated ticketing for the Ekka.

Recommendation: *The Queensland government introduce mandatory integrated public transport ticketing for the Ekka.*

South Australia

Large crowds regularly attend major events in Adelaide such as AFL games, cricket and the annual Clipsal 500 V8 Supercar race. Live music events and the annual Royal Adelaide Show also draw large crowds.

Patrons attending AFL games at AAMI Stadium (capacity 51,500) can use Footy Express bus services to access the venue. These services are covered by a levy on each event ticket, the price of which is deemed commercial in confidence. In the case of the Clipsal 500, which attracts more than 250,000 over four days, special transport services are funded directly by the event organiser and partly offset by government sponsorship.

The current redevelopment of the Adelaide Oval will see AFL games return to the venue, which will have a capacity of 55,000. Situated near the heart of the metropolitan transport network, the Adelaide Oval provides an ideal opportunity to encourage patrons to use trains, buses and trams to access events and leave the car at home. Integrated ticketing will play a major role in achieving a high public transport mode share for events held at the redeveloped Adelaide Oval.

It is expected that patronage on Adelaide's rail network will increase substantially from 2013 as network upgrades are completed. TTF believes integrated ticketing for events at the Adelaide Oval will provide an ideal opportunity for the state government to promote patronage on the revitalised rail network, and achieve the mandated 70 per cent public transport mode share for events at the redeveloped venue.

Recommendation: *The South Australian government considers integrated ticketing as a means of promoting the use of public transport to access events at the Adelaide Oval.*

Concluding remarks

As a major contributor to both the economy and the cultural fabric of Australia, the importance of major events cannot be understated. TTF believes it is appropriate to examine how accessibility to events is provided and where it can be improved.

This paper promotes the implementation of integrated ticketing, whereby a levy is imposed on each ticket sold to cover the cost of public transport to and from an event. For event patrons, integrated ticketing provides for seamless access to events and – in many cases – discounted public transport fares. For the general public, a higher public transport mode share for major events reduces the impact of congestion around venues during events, which usually occur in the off-peak and on weekends. Benefits for event organiser, aside from providing an enhanced customer experience, include the ability to offset costs associated with special transport and traffic management for major events, which are paid in full to government or transport operators in the absence of an integrated ticket.

TTF believes the reluctance of some venues and event administrators to embrace integrated ticketing due to price impacts on tickets is unfounded. Evidence from each jurisdiction suggests that integrated public transport ticketing for events encourages sustainable transport choices and does not discourage ticket sales.