

Question on Notice

No. 821

Asked on 11 August 2020

MR M BERKMAN ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

With reference to tertiary student concessions for public transport fares in Queensland and the government's recent decision to relax eligibility in light of the COVID-19 crisis—

Will the Minister advise (a) how many applications for concession *go* cards were refused on the basis of the applicant being an external student in each of the 2017–18, 2018–19 and 2019–20 financial years, (b) what the estimated annual savings recouped by Translink are through its policy of excluding external students from eligibility for tertiary concession fares and (c) whether the Minister will remove the distinction between internal and external students from eligibility criteria for tertiary concession fares to reflect that both internal and external students have the same limited earning and financial capacity?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Maiwar for the question.

In March this year—in light of the impacts of the pandemic—TransLink proactively advised all relevant education institutions to relax normal business rules, given that many tertiary and post-secondary courses were forced to move online and external due to the risks of COVID-19. As such, any student who would otherwise have been deemed as eligible, but due to COVID-19 is now studying externally through no fault of their own, is continuing to receive tertiary concession fares.

As of today, in South East Queensland there are over 100,000 students who continue to be eligible for, and are travelling on, concession fares. Any student who does not currently receive tertiary concession fares, but believes they should, is encouraged to contact their student administration to discuss their enrolment status, as each institution determines eligibility.

Public transport concessions provide a valuable benefit to eligible recipients, however, they also come at a significant cost to the Queensland Government and, therefore, taxpayers. The purpose of providing tertiary concessions currently is to facilitate affordable access to public transport for full-time tertiary students who need to travel to attend courses on campus.

No annual savings are 'recouped' by Translink.

Each tertiary institution determines whether a student is eligible or ineligible.

As the Member would be aware, the Queensland Government already provides a range of concessions to ensure a suitable level of access to public transport and mobility, while making public transport more affordable for vulnerable customer groups such as:

- children and infants
- seniors, pensioners and veterans
- people with a disability and their carers
- students, including primary, and secondary students
- eligible Jobseekers in receipt of Newstart or Youth Allowance
- asylum seekers.

The provision of these public transport concessions and assistance for the 2019–20 financial year came to a total cost of \$312.51 million for the Queensland Government.