

## Follow-Up Letter to NSW Trains

Cc: Transport for NSW, Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE), Minister for Transport

Dear NSW Trains

Subject: Follow-up on Previous Complaint and Request for Further Improvements

### Initial Gratitude and Continued Concerns

I'm writing to extend my heartfelt thanks for the positive steps you've taken in response to my previous letter. However, some issues persist that I believe can be further improved for the benefit of all passengers.

### Problematic Announcements and Request for Elimination

Two announcements in particular still contribute to a less-than-ideal travelling atmosphere:

- *"You could be fined for placing your feet on the seat"*
- *"For the convenience of other customers, please do not place your bags on the seats."*

The stern, authoritarian tone of both these announcement continues to contribute to a stressful environment, reinforcing a sense of surveillance and unease among passengers. Furthermore, its frequency appears to have increased, exacerbating the issue of "announcement fatigue," where passengers tune out even essential messages, potentially posing a safety risk.

It's crucial to note that the concept of 'announcement fatigue' is supported by academic research. The study "Message fatigue: Conceptual definition, operationalization, and correlates" by Jiyeon So, Soela Kim, and Heather Cohen, published on November 2, 2016, discusses the phenomenon of decreased attention and engagement due to repeated messaging ([Source](#)).

Given that these "problems" are infrequently if rarely observed, I strongly recommend the elimination of these messages altogether. Alternatively, these announcements could be restricted to times of high passenger volume and be reworded to convey the message in a more pleasant tone.

### Examples of Reworded Announcements

1. Feet on Seats:
  - "Let's make the journey comfortable for all. Please keep your feet off the seats. Much appreciated!"
  - "Help us maintain a clean environment by keeping your feet on the floor. Cheers!"
2. Bags on Seats:
  - "Brought a bag along? Fantastic! Please help keep seats free for fellow travellers. Ta!"
  - "Got a bag with you? Awesome, but let's keep the seats available for everyone. Cheers!"

### Arguments for Elimination:

1. **Context Sensitivity:** The messages don't consider the context—like an almost empty train—where putting a bag on an adjacent seat may not be an issue.
2. **Potential for Self-Regulation:** In a full train, passengers using common sense and widely available decency, will interact to remove bags from seats, eliminating the need for an announcement.

## Updated Recommendations

1. **Elimination or Limited Usage:** Strongly consider eliminating these announcements, or limit them to high-capacity times only.
2. **Tone and Language:** If necessary, use the reworded examples or similar friendly tones.
3. **Visual Aids:** Use signage or digital screens for these messages, reducing auditory stress.
4. **Passenger Feedback:** Continue to seek passenger input for announcement relevance and impact.
5. **Data Transparency:** Disclose any existing data or research that justifies the necessity of these announcements.

## Suggested Highest Value: "Positive Environment and Quality of Experience"

1. **Enhancing Customer Experience:** A shift from "obedience and compliance" to creating a more positive environment that passengers "look forward to" rather than "endure."
2. **Valuing Silence and Calm:** Recognising the psychological and restorative benefits of a quieter environment, particularly for commuters who may be looking for a respite from their busy lives. Studies indicate that exposure to constant noise can have detrimental effects on human health ([Source: World Health Organization](#)).

## Strategies for Encouraging Change

1. **User Feedback and Surveys:** Engage with commuters to collect preferences regarding announcements.
2. **Pilot Programs:** Implement trials with fewer and softer announcements, and gather passenger feedback thereafter.
3. **Consult with Experts:** Collaborate with psychologists and urban planners for evidence-based solutions.
4. **Holistic Rebranding:** Advocate for the view of public transport as a community space impacting commuters' mental and physical well-being.

## Reconsidering Organisational Values

I encourage NSW Trains to evolve its value system from focusing primarily on "obedience and compliance" to prioritising a "Positive Environment and Quality of Experience." A quieter environment could offer commuters a much-needed respite, consistent with World Health Organization studies on the negative impacts of constant noise.

## Conclusion

I look forward to a continued dialogue with NSW Trains and hope you will consider these recommendations for further improving the commuter experience.

Sincerely