

Accessible Point to Point Transport Working Group Forum Minutes

Tuesday, 11 September 2018 – 2pm – 3.30pm

1. Welcome

Present

Consumer Representatives

Karen Stewart (via conference call) Alice Springs Consumer
Michelle McColm User Group – Somerville

Industry Representatives

Hira Samy (via conference call) Alice Springs Multiple Purpose Taxi (MPT) Operator
Colin Dawson (via conference call) Alice Springs Taxi Network
Ali Rkein Darwin MPT Operator
Fred Franklin Darwin MPT Driver
George Jacob (via conference call) President, Alice Springs Taxi Driver Association
Georgina Bracken (via telephone) Operations Manager Tennant Creek Transport
Imran Nadeem Darwin Manager and Network

Government Representatives

Therese Schutt Transport Safety and Services
Bernie Ingram Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Chair)
Greg Turner DIPL (Deputy Chair)
Taunya Miller DIPL (Secretariat)

Apologies

Consumer Representatives

Noelene Swanson State Manager – National Disability Service
Deborah Bampton User Group – Somerville
Robyn Burrige User Group – Integrated Disability Action
Sue Shearer User Group – Council of the Ageing

Industry Representatives

Bill Piantoni Minibus Network and Operator
Kais Alselawi Operations Manager Grove Transport
Sam Abolghasemi Operations Manager Katherine Taxis

Government Representatives

Sam Livesley Department of Health, Office of Disability
Erin Ingham Assistant Director – Office of Disability
Traci Keys Anti-Discrimination Officer
May Taylor DIPL (Alice Springs)
Simon Gillam DIPL (Darwin)

2. General Business

2.1 Previous Confirm Minutes from Meeting 5 June 2018

The Chair welcomed all present and an introduction of members; including the new members was conducted.

The Working Group did not raise any issues with the tabled previous meeting minutes.

Action item: DIPL to provide the previous meeting minutes from June 2018 to the new Group members.

2.2 Previous Action Items

The Working Group discussed the action items from the previous meeting, including:

- Working Group Membership

Representatives from Gove, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Darwin were invited to join the Working Group as agreed upon at the previous meeting.

- Waiting Times for People in a Wheelchair

The Working Group discussed the waiting time data sheets provided by the Department, comparing the average waiting times for Multiple Purpose Taxis (MPT) and standard taxis in Darwin and Alice Springs for the period between January to March in 2017 and in 2018.

Data for the ASAP wait times (bookings made for immediate pickups) indicates that Darwin passengers receive their taxi earlier than those in Alice Springs. Wait times for MPT taxis are higher than standard taxis.

Data for the pre-booked wait times shows passengers in Darwin receive their service quicker than Alice Springs. Data also shows 2018 wait times have increased from 2017.

The Working Group discussed possible reasons for the higher waiting times for MPT taxis, particularly for Alice Springs, including:

- the meter for wheelchair jobs may not be turned on until after the customer is strapped in which may delay the 'pick up' time on the data,
- drivers in Alice Springs are focused on airport jobs instead of rank jobs in town,
- drivers may purposely ignore wheelchair jobs i.e. by leaving the meter running or by not checking their phones (Alice Springs Taxis sends wheelchair ASAP jobs to their drivers by SMS),
- drivers just do not want to accept wheelchair jobs,
- drivers pick up other jobs on the way to the wheelchair jobs causing the wait times to increase, and
- only certain drivers tend to pick up wheelchair jobs creating an unfair reliance on these drivers.

The Working Group suggested that the network could publish the job numbers for each MPT driver on the Network system against the hours worked to show the percentile of MPT jobs undertaken or that the taxi numbers could be increased in Alice Springs to decrease the waiting times.

The Working Group further discussed the lift incentives, noting that wheelchair users should have the ability to decline the incentive to certain drivers who have not performed well or have not acted in a professional manner to wheelchair users with the Department noting that a review of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (including lift incentives) will be reviewed.

The Working Group members also noted that the carers of the Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS) and Lift Incentive Scheme (LIS) members should keep a closer eye on the number of lift incentives and credit balance on the TSS cards and apply to CPV for further incentives or an increase in TSS funds.

It was noted that Tennant Creek does not have TSS members as they do not have an auto electrician certifier to install a Cab fare terminal in the minibus to accept the TSS cards. The Working Group was advised that residents of Tennant Creek could become members of the TSS if eligible and may also use their entitlements when travelling outside the area.

Action Item: DIPL to review the numbers of MPTs in Alice Springs to ensure they are sufficient to meet demand – the Group to make recommendations to Government if outcomes suggest an increase in MPT numbers is needed for Alice Springs.

Action item: DIPL to review the current lift incentive amounts against the current usage and budget.

Action item: DIPL to explore different approaches to the administration of Lift Incentives, including performance based options.

Action item: DIPL to promote Transport Subsidy and Lift Incentives Schemes across the regions to ensure wheelchair users are aware of the schemes.

Action item: DIPL to make enquiries regarding Cab Charge mobile devices for potential use in Tennant Creek.

- Terms of Reference

The Working Group was advised that the Director of Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport approved the updated Terms of Reference to remove the word 'Services' from the title.

- MPT Plugs

The Working Group was advised that the Department had commenced a review of taximeter specifications, explaining how MPT Plugs can be used for data and information collection, which could assist networks with determining what rates the taximeter is on in real time; the location of the taxi; and if a taxi is attempting to avoid wheelchair jobs through meter 'flashing' and leaving the meter on.

- Customer Service Issues

The Working Group was advised that the Department had contacted Networks in the Northern Territory for feedback on driver training. The network feedback generally indicated that driver standards have fallen in recent times due to operators having the ability to sign-off new entrants to the industry even though training and assessment is being delivered by the networks through accredited persons.

The Working Group noted that there may be a shortage of drivers in Alice Springs and enforcing stricter standards may lead drivers to move to another network.

The Group stressed that the onus should also be on the operator to train the drivers on how to operate their MPT vehicle.

The Group discussed the possibility to include different training requirements for MPT drivers to be included in the 2020 commercial passenger vehicle industry review, including disability specific training. The review should consider the previous national training regime and training in remote regions.

Action item: DIPL to clarify the obligations for MPT operators to provide clear instruction to each of their drivers to ensure they are aware of how to locate and operate in-vehicle restraint systems.

Action item: DIPL to contact operators to remind them of their obligations to provide sufficient training to new drivers.

- MPT Data

The MPT data sheet provided to the Working Group analyses the previous 6 months of MPT and Wheelchair Accessible Minibus (WAM) job data received from operators and networks in the Darwin region and shows that the MPT wheelchair jobs are higher than the WAM wheelchair jobs which could be due to the community's preference to use MPT taxis instead of WAM.

The Group briefly discussed options to develop minimum MPT job quotas and enforcement actions on low performing MPT vehicles however due to time restrictions this matter will be further discussed at the next meeting.

- Minimum MPT Job Performance Indicators

This action item was not discussed at this meeting due to time limitations; however, it will be placed on the agenda for the next Working Group meeting.

3. New Business

3.1 Identify Key Priority Areas to Improve Customer Service

The Working Group members noted that drivers of wheelchair taxis are inconsistent in that some drivers have the meter on as soon as they arrive, some do not, some drivers show up, some do not, some want cash for the job whilst other have the meter on.

The Working Group briefly mentioned the use of sliding board as an aid for wheelchair users to slide across the seat and as such could be picked up by a standard taxi; however, this method would only be useful for users with upper body ability and the Group should continue to focus on achieving equivalent wait times between MPTs and standards taxis.

3.2 Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards)

The Working Group was advised that a Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standard) is underway, which occurs every five years. The issues paper recently released sets out some of the considerations of the transport operators and providers, governments and disability sectors and asks questions regarding each sectors experience.

Submissions should be provided to the Disabilities Transport Access Secretariat within the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities by 30 November 2018.

Submissions details were provided to the Working Group members.

3.3 CPV Regulatory Model Six Monthly Review; Transport Subsidy Scheme Review; Working Group Webpage

The above agenda items were not discussed at this meeting due to time limitations; however, they will be placed on the agenda for the next Working Group meeting.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 9 October 2018 at 2 pm.

Meeting closed 3.40 pm