

Point to Point Wheelchair Transport Services Working Group Forum

Minutes

Tuesday, 10 April 2018, 10 am – 11:30 am

1. Welcome

Present

Consumer Representatives

Karen Stewart (via conference call)	Alice Springs Consumer
Susan Burns (via conference call)	National Disability Services (Proxy)
Sue Shearer	User Group – Council of the Ageing
Deborah Bampton	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	Taxi Council of the NT and Darwin MPT Operator
Fred Franklin	Darwin MPT Driver

Government Representatives

Sam Livesley	Department of Health, Office of Disability
Sally Sievers	Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Bernie Ingram	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Chair)
Greg Turner	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Deputy Chair)
May Taylor	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Alice Springs)
Simon Gillam	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
Shoma Moreau (Secretariat)	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

Apologies

Consumer Representatives

Robyn Burrige	User Group – Integrated Disability Action
Noeline Laurie	User Group – Disability Advocacy Service
Noelene Swanson	State Manager – National Disability Services

Industry Representatives

Bill Piantoni	Minibus Network and Operator
George Jacob	President, Alice Springs Taxi Driver Association

2. General Business

2.1 Overview of Role of Working Group

The Chair welcomed all present and an introduction of members was conducted.

The Chair provided an overview of the role for the forum.

3. New Business

3.1 Terms of Reference for Group

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Point to Point Wheelchair Transport Services Working Group (the Working Group) was discussed with agreement the ToR would be updated and tabled for the Working Group's consideration at the next meeting.

Action item: DIPL to update the ToR to reflect the Working Group's discussion outcomes and rename the Group to the 'Accessible Point to Point Transport Services Working Group'.

3.2 Membership of Working Group

The Working Group discussed membership and decided that an invitation should be extended to other relevant stakeholders based in Tennant Creek, Katherine and Gove.

Action item: DIPL to invite to join the Working Group, representatives from Katherine, Gove, Darwin Radio Taxi, Blue Taxi Company and Tennent Creek Transport.

3.3 Discussion on Transport Issues Affecting the Disability Sector

- Setting Key Performance Indicators on MPT Jobs

Concerns were raised that Multiple Purpose Taxis (MPT) within particular companies undertake more wheelchair jobs than those in other companies, therefore there is a struggle to keep up with demand. Furthermore, many drivers elect to use the 'High Occupancy' ability associated with MPTs e.g. preferring bottle shop jobs on the higher rate instead of accepting wheelchair jobs as required.

The Working Group agreed that the High Occupancy rate encourages MPT drivers to avoid wheelchair jobs in favour of journeys involving larger groups.

The Working Group suggested setting a benchmark for minimum monthly job numbers.

- Equity of Dispatched Jobs

The Working Group discussed ideas to assist with distributing jobs fairly through the fleet such as displaying MPT jobs on the dispatch screen; however, the Working Group agreed that all MPT drivers should undertake MPT jobs equally.

- Securing Wheelchairs in Vehicles

Concerns were raised about wheelchair tie down points not being up to an acceptable standard and that some MPT jobs had to be rejected due to not having the appropriate restraints or being too large/heavy to fit in an MPT vehicle. The Chair advised that the wheelchair tie down points are a national issue and a national review is currently underway.

The Working Group discussed the responsibilities of the suppliers of wheelchairs to ensure they provide wheelchair users with the appropriate equipment to complete the required task i.e. transport ready wheelchairs to persons intending to travel whilst seated in the wheelchair.

- Waiting Times for People in a Wheelchair

The Working Group raised concerns about the waiting times for people in wheelchairs suggesting that many MPT drivers avoid and procrastinate the collection of wheelchair passengers. Consequently, customers are left waiting an inappropriately long time. DIPL assured the Group that penalties can be applied to drivers who refuse MPT jobs.

Further concerns were raised with people on the Lift Incentive Scheme (LIS) running out of their yearly allowance, and drivers then choosing not to pick these passengers up as they would not receive the \$20 incentive amount.

Working Group requested that the LIS to be reviewed.

Action item: DIPL to analyse collected data in relation to flashing of the meter to identify MPT performance.

- Use of Privately Owned Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles as a Rideshare

Discussions were held around the rideshare services; noting that, there is a difference between commercial and private standards that relate to vehicle modifications, and that some private vehicles may not meet commercial standards for wheelchair accessibility.

Action item: DIPL to investigate what has occurred in other jurisdictions regarding accessible rideshare vehicle standards.

- Driver Training Issues

The Chair advised the Working Group that the responsibility of driver training falls on the industry to ensure that the driver meets the required competencies.

The Working Group suggested that many taxi drivers lack initiative to provide quality customer service and that some drivers did not drive appropriate to the circumstances; and do not drive with consideration to persons seated in wheelchairs i.e. driving too fast and failing to secure the wheelchair sufficiently.

The Working Group agreed to discuss this matter further in the next meeting and that the Department will consider undertaking Mystery Shopper campaigns to ascertain a better picture of the service currently being delivered to wheelchair users.

- LIS versus Charged Time

Clarification was provided to the Working Group that MPT drivers are permitted to start their meters whilst securing wheelchair passengers into the MPT vehicle.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 5 June 2018

Meeting closed 11:30pm