

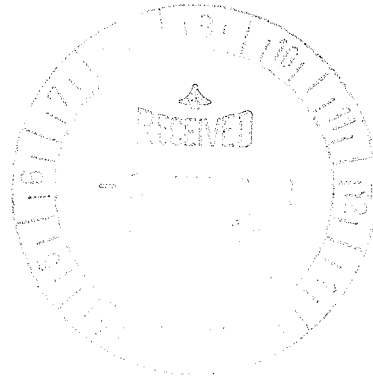


Department of Human Services

Secretary

50 Lonsdale Street
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
DX210081
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Telephone: (03) 9096 8580
Facsimile: (03) 9096 9220

- 4 JUL 2008



e1248414

Mr Michael Cunningham
Regulatory Program Manager
Taxi Fare Review
Essential Services Commission
Level 2/35 Spring St
MELBOURNE 3000

Dear Mr Cunningham

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the *Draft Report Taxi Fare Review 2007-08*.

The Department of Human Services is committed to ensuring that all Victorians have access to quality services that protect and enhance the community's physical, mental and social well-being. Access to affordable, reliable and high quality taxi services is an important issue for Victorians with a disability and for people who are frail aged. The Multi Purpose Taxi Program is the main Government transport program specifically to assist people with a severe and permanent disability.

A number of key reports, including those of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the five year Review of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport highlight the considerable problems and discrimination experienced by taxi users in relation to waiting times, availability of wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) and quality of service.

The *Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport draft report January 2008* found that nationally the taxi industry is not expecting to be in a position to meet the Transport Standards requirement under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* that the response times for accessible vehicles be the same as other taxis.

There is no legislative, policy or funding framework for the provision of Community Transport in Victoria which is generally provided through a range of community and not for profit organisations and Local Governments. The development of transport responses for the increasing ageing population in Victoria and for areas lacking in transport options particularly growth areas and those areas with low density population is becoming increasingly urgent. Community Transport is an important component in the continuum of transport provision.

Given the importance of taxi services in the provision of transport for older people and people with a disability, the Department of Human Services supports a number of the recommendations proposed in the draft paper including:

- The broad objectives for the taxi industry as proposed in the taxi fare review especially;
 - Ensure vehicle and driver customer service standards and the safety and reliability of taxi services that meet the needs of the customer
 - Ensure taxi standards for people with disabilities be equal to those for able bodied people
- The recommendations to improve access and affordability, in particular reducing the red tape in the MPTP application process, reviewing subsidy trip levels and the subsidy cap.
- The proposal to achieve equal taxi response times especially for WAT and the consideration that there be an increase in the number of WAT licences.
- The development of key performance indicators that are published every six months including a broad range of indicators relating to booking service waiting times, wheelchair service times, customer satisfaction and complaints statistics.
- The development of a complaints process that should be accessible for those with a disability
- A review of community based transport services in Victoria.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide comment. Should you require further information please contact Ms Rina Sherry of Disability Services on 9096 2832.

Yours sincerely



FRAN THORN
Secretary