

Accessible Point to Point Transport Working Group Forum Minutes

Tuesday, 9 October 2018 – 2pm – 3.30pm

1. Welcome

Present

Consumer Representatives

Valerie Dearman (via conference call)
Sue Shearer
Robyn Burridge
Tahlia Joy (on behalf of Deborah Bampton)

CEO Disability Advocacy Services
User Group – Council of the Ageing
User Group – Integrated Disability Action
User Group – Somerville

Industry Representatives

Fred Franklin
Imran Nadeem

Darwin MPT Driver
Darwin Manager and Network

Government Representatives

Sally Sievers (on behalf of Traci Keys)
Bernie Ingram
Greg Turner
Simon Gillam
May Taylor (via conference call)
Taunya Miller

Anti-Discrimination Office
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Chair)
DIPL (Deputy Chair)
DIPL (Darwin)
DIPL (Alice Springs)
DIPL (Secretariat)

Apologies

Consumer Representatives

Noelene Swanson
Deborah Bampton
Karen Stewart

State Manager – National Disability Service
User Group – Somerville
Alice Springs Consumer

Industry Representatives

Hira Samy
Colin Dawson
Ali Rkein
George Jacob
Georgina Bracken
Kais Alselaoui
Sam Abolghasemi
Bill Piantoni
Terry Pachos

Alice Springs Multiple Purpose Taxi (MPT) Operator
Alice Springs Taxi Network
Darwin MPT Operator
President, Alice Springs Taxi Driver Association
Operations Manager Tennant Creek Transport
Operations Manager Grove Transport
Operations Manager Katherine Taxis
Minibus Network and Operator
Darwin Manager and Network

Government Representatives

Sam Livesley
Erin Ingham
Traci Keys
Therese Schutt

Department of Health, Office of Disability
Assistant Director – Office of Disability
Director, Anti-Discrimination Office
DIPL (Alice Springs)

2. General Business

2.1 Previous Confirmation of Minutes from Meeting 11 September 2018

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

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

2.2 Previous Action Items

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

- MPT (Multi-Purpose Taxi) Data

The Working Group discussed the MPT job data from the Darwin and Alice Springs region collected by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics over a three year period (2016, 2017 and 2018).

The results indicated that during 2016 the average wheelchair jobs completed per MPT in the Darwin region was 294, 304 in 2017 and in 2018 it was 329 jobs.

In comparison with Alice Springs, the average wheelchair jobs completed per MPT was 390 in 2016, 431 in 2017 and in 2018 it was 486 jobs.

The Working Group was advised that the MPT job numbers were analysed as part of the Review of the Reforms of the Disability Sector (the Review). The review which is not yet finalised also analysed the average wait times per MPTs in Darwin and Alice Springs, indicating that the average wait times for MPTs in Alice Springs are approximately two minutes longer than Darwin wait times for MPTs.

The MPT job data also included average job numbers completed by the wheelchair accessible minibus (WAM) fleet in the Darwin and Alice Springs region.

Discussion was held around how WAMs operate differently to MPT's, specifically due to the unregulated fares and pricing structure of minibuses. The group acknowledged the differences in operation between MPTs and WAMs and that many users did not consider minibuses as a viable alternative to taxis.

Action item: The Working Group is to review the MPT data sheet and make recommendations at the next meeting as to whether it is considered that there are sufficient numbers of MPTs in Alice Springs to meet demand and whether the WAM job numbers should be included with the MPT job numbers.

- Minimum MPT Job Performance Indicators

MPT data collected shows that 10% of the taxis are doing 50% of the MPT jobs, and 20% of the taxis are doing very little MPT jobs.

It was noted that 20% of the taxi fleet in Alice Springs and Darwin are accessible to wheelchair passengers, however if operators choose not to operate, numbers are reduced which affects service delivery.

The Working Group was asked to consider whether the group should make a recommendation to Government to increase the number of MPTs in Alice Springs and/or Darwin to improve services to persons travelling in a wheelchair.

The collected MPT data identifies how many wheelchair jobs each MPTs are completing each month and showcases which MPTs are considered to be in the low percentile group (completing a low amount of wheelchair jobs). The key issue is whether the Group wishes to use this data to set minimum benchmarks for industry.

The Group suggested that the driver / operator of the MPTs in the low job percentile group be contacted in the first instance to be given the opportunity to provide an explanation why they have performed low wheelchair job numbers.

The Working Group noted the importance of improving the efficiency of the MPTs currently in use noting that there has been a number of occasions where wheelchair users have called up a network for a MPT and a standard taxi shows up instead.

The working group noted that importance of Networks ensuring that they send out the correct taxi type.

Action item: DIPL to send out courtesy emails to all Networks across the Territory regarding training staff at call centres to ensure the correct taxi type is sent out to passengers, seek feedback regarding drivers training and specific training in strapping in wheelchairs.

Action item: Members to review and discuss the MPT job data with peers or consumers to determine an acceptable low percentile number of wheelchair jobs. The Group will discuss this further at the next meeting.

Action item: DIPL to contact operators in the low percentile group to show cause for the low amount of completed wheelchair jobs.

3. New Business

3.1 CPV Regulatory Model Six Monthly Review – Effects on the Disability Sector

The Working Group was advised that a six monthly review has commenced to determine if the introduction of ridesharing has any adverse effects on the disability sector. This review included a survey, a mystery shopper program in Darwin and Alice Springs, jurisdictional comparisons and analysis of data i.e. taxi wait times, job numbers and complaint data. The Department also contacted disability organisations and Transport Subsidy Scheme members for feedback. The review is not yet finalised.

3.2 Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS) Review

The Working Group was informed that a review of the TSS is currently being conducted by an external consultant and is expected to conclude late December 2018. Outcomes from the review would not be expected until mid-2019.

3.3 Working Group Webpage

Members of the Working Group in attendance agreed to allow the Department to publish their contact details on the Working Group webpage. Members not in attendance today will be contacted for approval.

3.4 Identify Key Priority Areas to Improve Customer Service

The Working Group discussed several key priority areas to improve customer service including:

- Ensuring drivers are appropriately trained especially with the MPT lift mechanisms and restrain systems
- Can speak English well
- Know the location of the drop off point
- Not speak on mobile phones (Bluetooth) with passengers in the car

The Working Group considered the issue of a taxi driver not being able to speak or understand English fluently is an Australian wide industry issue and not necessarily just a Northern Territory issue.

It was noted that some Network systems allows it to be used as a GPS and as such the drivers can enter the destination address into the system so they should not get lost.

Networks do not have access to all the different MPT vehicles for training and consider the onus should be placed onto the operator of each vehicle to train its drivers on the specific use of that vehicle's wheelchair restrain systems.

The Working Group was informed that the responsibility of training was put back to industry in December 2017 following a 12 month industry training trial period, as feedback received regarding the previous National Training program suggested the national training did not achieve the required results.

The Working Group discussed the positives of implementing driver training refresher courses for professional development and debated possible deficiencies in the current training scheme; however, it was noted that any mandated changes to bring back training to the Government's responsibility or a requirement of a refresher course could not be implemented until after the 2020 review.

Action item: Members in Darwin and Alice Springs to discuss and develop a list of key priority areas to improve customer service which will be discussed at the next meeting.

Action item: DIPL to gather data regarding driver training / refresher training for consideration in the 2020 review. This includes incorporating additional disability specific training.

Action item: DIPL to consider adding into the bailment agreement a sign off sheet for operators to complete which identifies each driver as competent in operating the specific vehicle's wheelchair accessibility systems.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4 December 2018 at 2 pm.

Meeting closed 3.35 pm