

Accessible Point to Point Transport Working Group Forum Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 5 March 2019 – 2pm – 3.30pm

Wanaka Room, Level 2, Energy House, 18 – 20 Cavenagh Street, Darwin

1. Welcome

Present

Consumer Representatives

Karen Stewart (via video conference call)

Michelle McColm

Alice Springs Consumer

User Group – Somerville

Industry Representatives

Hira Samy (via video conference call)

Imran Nadeem

Fred Franklin

Georgina Bracken (via telephone call)

Multiple Purpose Taxi (MPT) Operator

Darwin Radio Taxis network

Darwin MPT Driver

Tennant Creek Transport

Government Representatives

Rose Nardone on behalf of Sam Livesley

Traci Keys

Bernie Ingram

Greg Turner

Simon Gillam

May Taylor

Taunya Miller

Department of Health, Office of Disability

Director, Anti-Discrimination Office

DIPL (Chair)

DIPL (Deputy Chair)

DIPL (Darwin)

DIPL (Alice Springs)

DIPL (Secretariat)

Apologies

Consumer Representatives

Robyn Burridge

Sue Shearer

Helen Egan

Terry Thommeny

User Group – Integrated Disability Action

User Group – Council of the Ageing

State Manager – National Disability Service

CEO Disability Advocacy Services

Industry Representatives

Kais Alselawi

Sam Abolghasemi

Bill Piantoni

Terry Pachos

Colin Dawson (via video conference call)

Gove Transport network

Katherine Taxis network

Metro Minibus network

Blue Taxis network

Alice Springs Taxis network

Government Representatives

Erin Ingham

Deputy Director – Office of Disability

2. General Business

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes from Meeting 4 December 2018

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

A Working Group member requested that DIPL amend the previous meeting minute summary regarding driver training to reflect that the drivers should take a ride in the back of a MPT, in a wheelchair, as a wheelchair passenger.

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

The Chair advised that the previous meeting minutes have been summarised and are listed on the Working Group webpage and that the Working Group will be provided a copy of the summarised meeting minutes in future.

Action item: DIPL to amend the previous meeting minutes to reflect the working group comment that drivers should take a ride in an MPT in a wheelchair (as a wheelchair passenger) as part of their training regime in future.

2.2 Previous Action Items

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

1. MPT (Multi-Purpose Taxi) Data

An overview of the taxi ballots and taxi caps in Darwin and Alice Springs region was provided to the Working Group.

The Working Group members noted that increasing the MPTs will ease the workload for wheelchair jobs and that increasing the number of MPTs would assist with pick up and wait times.

The Working Group was supportive of recommending to the Government that any new taxi licences should be issued as MPTs only and any taxi operator who has a current standard taxi licence issued to them already, can be transferred to MPT licences.

Action item: DIPL to provide the Working Group recommendation to the Northern Territory Government regarding restricting the issuing of any new taxi licences in Darwin and Alice Springs to MPTs only and that any taxi operator with a current standard taxi licence can be transferred to a MPT licence in order to improve transportation services to wheelchair passengers.

2. Minimum MPT Job Performance Indicators

a) An overview of the tabled MPT percentile group data sheet was provided to the Working Group and relates to the number of wheelchair jobs completed in an MPT vehicle submitted to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) on a monthly basis by taxi networks and taxi operators in the Darwin and Alice Springs region.

Using a percentile range to determine a minimum wheelchair passenger number (benchmark) that MPTs should have completed during that reporting month, DIPL is contacting any operators of MPTs which have fallen below the benchmark for clarification and reasons for carrying low wheelchair passenger numbers.

The table identified three separate percentile ranges (10%, 20% and 30%); the 'low' number benchmark for each percentile range and the number of MPTs which fall into the 'low' wheelchair passenger job number category.

The Working Group discussed the tabled results and were asked to consider what would be the fairest percentile range for DIPL to use to then establish a minimum wheelchair job number for each month.

It was confirmed that if the whole region has completed lower amount of wheelchair jobs then it would be reflected through the percentiles.

A representative from a Network advised the Working Group that he has already seen an increase in wheelchair jobs since DIPL has started contacting MPT operators of low percentile ranges.

The Working Group agreed that the 20% percentile range should be trialed for a 6 month period as 10% is considered too low.

Action item: DIPL to implement the 20% percentile range for MPT low wheelchair passenger job numbers and trial it for 6 months. The group is to reassess in 6 months' time.

- b) The Working Group was advised that DIPL has written to the operators of MPTs in the low percentile groups seeking clarification and reasons for carrying low wheelchair passengers.

The responses received from the taxi operators ranged from having limited drivers available to wheelchair vehicles not being available due to broken lift mechanisms.

Action item: DIPL to continue to monitor and contact operators of MPTs who have completed low wheelchair passenger numbers.

3. Identify Key Priority Areas to Improve Customer Service

This action item was raised a number of meetings ago which involved members from Networks and consumers forming a sub-committee to consider the key priority areas to improve customer service so that the Working Group can discuss and come up with solutions. Unfortunately this hasn't progressed too far.

The Working Group agreed the best way forward to deal with this action item is to discuss the issues as a whole group instead of forming sub-committees. It was noted, however; that if a particular issue was brought to the attention of DIPL or a Network that the issues could be resolved outside of the Working Group.

The Working Group discussed that the following recommendations to improve customer service has been implemented in one of the Networks, including:

- Reducing the amount of errors when sending wheelchair vehicles to passengers by providing further training to its call centre staff and by:
 - a) Investigating complaints which showed that some wheelchairs users thought the standard TAXI was for them when their MPT was a few minutes behind.
 - b) Determining the quickest solution to get the wheelchair passenger picked up,
- Driver training, specifically that the onus should be placed on the operators of MPTs to train its drivers on the operational use of the MPT.
- Communication in terms of how the driver speaks to wheelchair passengers ensuring they can speak and write English properly.

A Working Group member advised the group that earlier that day she was picked up by a suspected new driver who could not work her Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) card and did not put the front seat down so that she could see through to the front (which is the usual occurrence in that type of MPT vehicle) and reiterated the importance of driver training so that they know how to work the lift mechanism, particularly with new drivers.

Another member from a Network advised the Working Group that her wheelchair minibus driver had undergone training which included being driven around in a wheelchair in the wheelchair minibus. The driver indicated that this was an interesting and enlightening experience and learnt a

lot by being a wheelchair passenger and would like to see that incorporated into the driver training regime.

Action item: The Working Group to discuss key areas to improve customer service at the next meeting, specifically issues with drivers not able to use the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) card and inability to work the vehicles' lift mechanisms.

4. Driver Training

- a) The Working Group was advised that Queensland Transport have recently published their formal Personalised Transport Required Driver Training which sets the compulsory training requirements in Queensland including that Transport drivers need to be trained in anti-discrimination awareness (including disability specific awareness).

A free online disability awareness course that was developed as part of an Australian Government initiative and covers topics including 'What is Disability', 'Legislation and Policy' and 'Disability in the Community' is provided at: <https://disabilityawareness.com.au/>

Concerns were raised on whether the legislation training on the online disability awareness course includes the Northern Territory based legislation and the Anti-Discrimination Office will review the online course and provide an update to the group at the next meeting.

Currently the Anti-Discrimination Office in the Northern Territory does not provide online training as their training is focused on challenging attitudes and values and is conducted face to face.

It was also noted that the Australian Network on Disability conducts disability training however you must be a member to access the course.

Darwin Radio Taxis (Network) has joined Australian Taxi Industry Associations (ATIA) and will be meeting with its CEO, Blair Davies, who is involved in many discussions regarding driver training. An update on this discussion will be provided to the Working Group at the next meeting.

The Queensland driver training notice is found at <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/business-industry/Taxi-and-limousine/Industry-information/Industry-regulations/Personalised-transport-industry-driver-training>

Action item: The Anti-Discrimination Office to review the online Australian Disability Awareness Course and provide feedback to the Working Group on its relevance to the Northern Territory.

Action item: Darwin Radio Taxis to provide feedback from his discussions with the Australian Taxi Industry Associations (ATIA) regarding driver training.

- b) The Working Group was advised that feedback received from industry regarding Bailment Agreements was somewhat supportive particularly with keeping the operational use of the vehicle between the operator and drivers, however; some feedback raised concern about additional Government red tape and that it may cause drivers to leave the industry.

The group was advised that the purpose of the Bailment Agreement is to ensure that both parties are clearly aware of their requirements and obligations in terms of the operation and use of the vehicle.

DIPL has included a check box into the Bailment Agreement to ensure the drivers have been appropriately trained by the operator in using vehicle specific restraints and wheelchair lift mechanisms.

5. Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) and Lift Incentive Scheme (LIS)

The action items relating to Action item 5.a and b will be carried over to future meetings until the full review of the TSS and LIS is finalised by the external consultant.

DIPL has also provided information on Transport Subsidy and Lift Incentive Schemes to National Disability Services and the Office of Disability to further promote the schemes to medical practitioners, health care providers and aged care providers across the Northern Territory.

This action item is complete.

The Working Group noted that the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) provides a list of service providers which is found at: <https://ntcoss.org.au/>

6. Major Events

The Working Group was advised that DIPL has contacted City of Darwin Traffic Management Group about ensuring access to the entrance of events is permitted for MPTs (allowing wheelchair passengers to be picked up at dropped off at the gates).

The Traffic Management Group will ensure that all traffic management plans in future will include a clause to afford MPTs access to the events.

This action item is complete.

7. Wheelchair Tie Downs/ Restraints

The Working Group was advised that DIPL has made enquiries within industry (including road safety, road vehicle standards, local engineers and interstate manufacturers who carry out modifications for wheelchairs) regarding automatic count for wheelchair restraints and tie downs measures for MPT vehicles.

Unfortunately there are no known automatic counts for wheelchair restraints and tie downs measures that could be used for MPTs. The nearest measure available would be a docking station where the wheelchair can lock into the docking station but this would not be suitable for MPTs due to the vast varieties of wheelchairs used. The docking station would be appropriate for personal use only.

This action item is complete.

3. **New Business**

3.1 **Other Business Items**

The Working Group did not raise any new business items for discussion at today's meeting.

4. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 4 June 2019 at 2pm.

Meeting closed 3.20pm