

IPART enquiry Maximum Fares for Rank and Hail taxi services from 1 July 2025

Submission from Phil Doyle Bailee taxi driver

19 September 2024

1. My name is Phil Doyle. I am a vocational Bailee taxi driver with over ten years of experience working in north western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.
2. On March 3 2021 I was shot in Riverstone in Sydney's north west shortly after 9am. After being shot I drove my passenger and myself to Windsor Hospital to access urgently needed medical care. I mention this to highlight the risks faced by taxi drivers and their vulnerability in providing an essential public service. The shooter has never been found, and probably never will be. But my family and I live with the trauma of this experience every day.
3. While negotiating Windsor Road in peak hour with a bullet in the belly and an agitated passenger with four bullets in him is at the more extreme end of the risk spectrum, most taxi drivers would experience some form of negative human interaction weekly. This can vary from rudeness, verbal abuse, non payment to threats of violence or dealing with someone who is deeply intoxicated or engaging in harmful or criminal activity, to even outright violence. In most instances it is too time consuming and ineffectual to report these incidents to Police, especially when drivers already work long hours and need to make an income.
4. There is a shortage of taxi drivers across NSW, which is unsurprising given that taxi drivers receive extremely poor remuneration while working long hours with no paid sick leave, no holiday pay, no penalty rates, no superannuation while operating under the threat of significant harm and having to negotiate the appalling state of NSW roads and traffic and a very strict regulatory regime. The biggest losers in all this are the travelling public, who cannot access taxis in a timely manner in many parts of the state because no drivers are available.
5. In financial year 2023-24 I earned \$30,727 before tax, working a forty hour week, rising at 3.30am and working a ten hour shift. I have about \$20,000 in super that I haven't added to in ten years. I have no savings. My car is in need of repair. My current bank account balance is \$74.68. I owe a friend \$500 and next week I have an electricity bill of \$169.30, \$400 in rent and \$100 for PTSD counselling.
6. The cost of living pressures on Bailee taxi drivers are enormous. Bailee taxi drivers received nothing when taxi plate owners were compensated, or in class actions against rideshare multinationals.
7. The poor remuneration means that many vocational drivers – who drive taxis as their primary (often only) income – are being squeezed out of the industry as they simply can't survive on such low incomes. These experienced drivers, who are acculturated to the needs of passengers and who possess important knowledge and understand what is expected in providing a good service, are being replaced by short term and part time drivers who are desperate to make whatever money they can at anyone's expense and are not acculturated to the social and ethical standards demanded of this industry.
8. In spite of this economic savagery I love my job. I love being of use to the community. Many of the people we take every day are isolated through age or illness. We negotiate the

whole catastrophe of the human condition and it's a rewarding experience. Most people are trying to do their best, often in very difficult circumstances, and it's a blessing to be able to help make a positive difference to someone's day. We need drivers that respect and value their passengers as human beings and don't just view them as a wallet on legs.

9. The last IPART determined increase for taxi services was in 2014, an increase to cover the sudden and significant increase in LPG prices (Initially no increase was granted in 2014). The last determined fare increase of general fares was in 2013. Inflation between 2014 and 2023 is 27%¹, with inflation for the financial year ending June 24 at 3.8%². The cost of living has gone up by almost a third in the last decade, and drivers on such low incomes are feeling it.
10. There was a time, not long ago, when a bailee taxi driver could live in what the late Justice Higgins once referred to as "Frugal Comfort"³. I don't think it is impertinent to expect that people providing such an integral, demanding, risk filled and short staffed occupation as taxi driving should expect to enjoy a reasonable standard of living for expending the time and energy in making a vocation of this industry.
11. To ensure the needs of passengers are met by motivated, acculturated and service driven vocational drivers an urgent increase in drivers incomes is needed. I would recommend that Rank and Hail fare tariffs be increased in line with inflation since the last determined increase and be raised by 30%.
12. Furthermore I would recommend that Rank and Hail Tariffs be adjusted annually on the 1 July indexed to inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This is to ensure the problem we face in attracting vocational and acculturated drivers does not return.
13. Because of the real and critical need of bailee taxi drivers I would recommend that the 30% increase in rank and hail fares be brought forward from 1 July 2025 and be implemented from 1 November 2024 by means of an urgent interim report to the NSW Minister for Transport.
14. If incomes continue to fall in real terms then standards of service delivery will also fall. Despite statements by the Taxi Council and the Point to Point Commission, unacculturated short term drivers simply don't care about the perception of the industry. They will come in, make a quick buck, and leave the industry before any regulatory standard is imposed. This is unsurprising given training is rudimentary at best. You pay peanuts, you get monkeys. This is equally true of rideshare as it is of taxis.
15. It is worth noting that taxi drivers incomes are limited by the Laws of Physics. We can only be in one place at a time, which means that even if we worked every minute of every shift there would still be a ceiling to what we could earn. The argument that cheaper fares would create more work leading to higher overall incomes is fallacious in the extreme. There are many push factors to taxi demand and price is just one of them. In my experience the vast majority of taxi journeys are undertaken because people need to travel and they don't have a lot of options. Rideshare has certainly taken most of the price sensitive demand away from taxi services, yet taxi services still have significant patronage. Many taxi patrons use taxis exclusively for a range of reasons including, but not limited to; inexperience with technology, distrust of financial platforms, lack of digitally accessible funds, habit,

1 RBA inflation calculator <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/>

2 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/consumer-price-index-australia/latest-release>

3 <https://www.apf.gov.au/binaries/library/intguide/law/harvester.pdf>

preference for dealing with regular drivers and dislike of – or previous bad experiences with - rideshare companies.

16. An increase in Rank and Hail Fares by 30% may sound large, but it is covering a ten year period without a fare increase, and is unremarkable when contrasted with the experience in Western Australia, where fares have risen by 22.27% since 2021. There have been no reports from Western Australia of the imminent collapse of taxis as an integral part of point to point transport in that state.
17. I would like to thank IPART for giving me the opportunity to make this submission as often in this debate the voice of the very people this industry revolves around, the men and women behind the wheel of the taxis, is ignored or unheard. I am available to expand upon or explain any of the above points or address any other issues the tribunal may feel is pertinent.

Phil Doyle