

Submission by Phil Doyle to IPART maximum fares for rank and hail taxi services from 1 July 2025 Draft Report

I am a Bailee Taxi Driver with almost 15 years experience driving taxis in western Sydney and regional NSW.

1. The IPART maximum fares for rank and hail taxi services from 1 July 2025 Draft Report has left Bailee Taxi Drivers angry.
2. The findings that the market for Rank and Hail (R&H) services is in balance is delusional.
3. Last year I earned \$28,000 as a full time taxi driver working a 38 hour week. The tax office estimates that the typical earnings of a full time bailee taxi driver are \$35,000. This is below the minimum wage.
4. It is impossible to live on the Sydney basin on \$28,000 a year. This income is well below the Henderson Poverty Line. This forces drivers to live two to three to a room, or two to three families in the one house.
5. The analysis by the tribunal of the costs for operating a taxi service are wrong. While taxi drivers incomes are down, as per the reports findings, the cost of living has violently increased. Rents alone have nearly trebles since the last significant increase in 2012. Drivers are human beings. We don't live in a box between shifts. We have lives and responsibilities we need to meet. Plate expenses – identified by the tribunal as a significant cost imposition that has been lifted – were never an issue for bailee drivers. We have had no compensation for the impact of Uber and other rideshares' predatory pricing model. You would never get rich of taxi driving but you could make a living off it. This is no longer the case.
6. On top of earning less than the minimum wage for working full time, Bailee Taxi Drivers receive no paid sick days or superannuation.
7. The Tribunal's findings of a market in balance is based on someone earning less than \$30,000 a year who can expect to be shot, vomited on, assaulted, abused, spat on and mocked. The Bailee Taxi Driver also gets people to vital appointments such as dialysis, helps people escape Domestic Violence, deal with the free-range psychiatric institutions that are our public housing estates, gets people who are temporarily without a vehicle to their destination, and allows the elderly and the disabled to live with some small degree of independence.
8. The findings of a market in balance are based on exploiting drivers, who are largely first generation immigrants. These drivers soon leave the industry resulting in driver churn.
9. Because of this churn this "balance" leads to an increase in drivers who are unacculturated to industry standards. Drivers are not just unacculturated to the geography of Sydney – which itself is a big problem – but with colloquial English and cultural standards. Examples of this include a vision impaired passenger with an assistance dog being told at Blacktown Rail Station Rank that his dog could travel in the boot. Every young woman has a story about a taxi or rideshare driver behaving in an inappropriate or creepy manner or worse.
10. A Melbourne University study of Uber drivers showed that the median length of tenure for an Uber driver was four months. Half of the drivers didn't even last four months. 95% of drivers were looking for other employment. A similar study of the NSW taxi industry would reveal the same results.

11. As with Uber these increasingly temporary drivers will seek to take advantage of vulnerable passengers. This is evident in Penrith where a large number of drivers charge flat cash rates and do not log on to networks.
12. All the point to point enforcement officers in the world with their Cosplay stab proof vests will not make a jot of difference because the high volume of transitory unacculturated drivers will simply take their poor attitudes to other industries after a short time.
13. Bailee Taxi Drivers have had ten years of their incomes being undermined by predatory pricing. If I broke into your house and stole goods worth 30% of your annual income that would be considered theft, yet this is what has happened to Bailee Taxi Drivers.
14. Bailee Taxi Drivers need an immediate 30% increase to our incomes to survive in Sydney.
15. A 30% increase will have little effect on demand as taxi use is driven by need. People need to get from A to B. If they had an alternative way of doing it they would do it. Catching taxis is not a recreational activity, it's a transport choice of last resort. The price is immaterial.
16. Section 2.5 of the draft report states: "If fares are not at sufficient level to cover costs, drivers and taxi service providers will reduce or withdraw supply". That is what is happening! The number of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis has gone from over 900 to near 500 in the last five years. In the Hawkesbury region the number of taxi operators has gone from four to one in the last eight years, and the number of taxis from fifteen to four.
17. The report is a report by the eastern suburbs and north shore of Sydney for the eastern suburbs and north shore of Sydney. The Tribunal needs to be reminded the geographical centre of Sydney is Pendle Hill. Yet currently it is very difficult to get a taxi in large parts of Western Sydney. Try getting a taxi in Cranebrook, or Riverstone. Passengers recently had to wait *four days* to get a taxi from South Maroota, which is about 30kms from the GPO. At Richmond taxis we constantly have to knock back jobs because we physically cannot do them, either because they are too far away or because they would clash with existing bookings.
18. Western Sydney has long distances and poor public transport. People rely on taxis to get around. Cutting the tariff for trips over 12 Kilometres further disadvantages the already dire situation of the industry in western Sydney and other areas of outer Sydney, especially along growth corridors between Campbelltown and Wilton, and the Liverpool and Hills LGAs.
19. At a time when wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATS) are failing to service existing demand this report offers a lifting fee that is 20% *Lower* than the comparable fee in Victoria. There has been no consideration of a partial lifting fee – as is used in Victoria – for sedans to take foldable wheelchairs to take some of the demand pressures of WATS vehicles.
20. WATS driver training should be free and on demand. The existing costs for WATS drivers is too exorbitant for Bailee Taxi Drivers to afford. And courses are run only if there is sufficient demand, which there seldom is.
21. Recent moves by the state government to address the failures of the WATS system mean nothing if there is no additional recruitment of drivers.
22. I want to keep driving taxis but will be unable to if this report is adopted. I cannot pay rent and basic living expenses on \$28,000 a year. I missed my daughter's 21st in February and haven't had a

holiday since 2018. I have contributed nothing to my superannuation for 15 years. I can't afford to. We don't need some passive aggressive "well that's your choice" response. That invalidating language is a cop out used by sociopaths to justify destroying people's lives. On top of everything else we don't need to be blamed for our own oppression.

23. This industry is like a blocked toilet at the moment. IPART has an opportunity to fix that. The draft report will merely entrench the exploitation of bailee drivers and lower industry standards for service delivery. Standards will continue to decline as good vocational drivers leave the industry and the number of unacculturated drivers increases until for many passengers taxis and rideshare will not be a safe transport option.

24. Bailee Taxi Drivers need an immediate 30% increase in tariffs to put their incomes on a sustainable level, for the industry to attract better quality drivers and provide an essential service for those vulnerable communities that rely on our hard work.

Phil Doyle

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