



Review of maximum fares for rank and  
hail taxi services from 1 July 2025

## Public Hearing Transcript

March 2025

Transport >>

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## Acknowledgment of Country

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present.

We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

## Tribunal Members

The Tribunal members for this review are:

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## The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

IPART's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Further information on IPART can be obtained from [IPART's website](#).

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# 1 Taxi Fare Draft Report Public Hearing – 10 March 2025

## 1.1 Welcome

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Just so you're aware, being a public hearing, if the media are present, or anyone else that's present here today wish to publish, they are free to do so, and anyone may refer to what is said during this event. So just be aware it is a public hearing.

That said, we do want to create an environment where everybody feels comfortable to speak. So we do ask that everyone's respectful of each other's time, the length of your comments, and in the way that you convey your views, and I will certainly do my best to get around to everybody, so that we can hear from as many people as possible today.

All right, just moving to the agenda itself today. In a moment IPART's chair. Carmel Donnelly will commence with an Acknowledgement of Country.

The review team will give a short presentation, and then we'll open up to discussion, and most of today will be set aside for discussion, to give you the opportunity to provide comments or feedback on the issues that are important to you, and everyone, as I say, is encouraged to share their views.

Now we've set aside about 2 hours for today's public hearing, so that should give us plenty of time to cover most of the territory, but if we don't get to everybody, we will capture all of the questions that are dropped into the chat box. So please drop your questions in, we will address them in one form or another. Noting that this hearing is part of the way we get feedback in considering the final recommendations that we'll make.

I'll now hand over to Carmel Donnelly, IPART's Chair.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thank you, Andrew, and good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us.

As Andrew said, my name is Carmel Donnelly. I'm the Chair of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal known as IPART for short, and with me today are Tribunal members, Daryl Biggar, Jonathan Coppel, and Sharon Henrik, and we're also joined by IPART staff, including Jennifer Vincent, Claudio Campi and Martin Tran, and some others.

And the IPART people here today are very much here to hear your views and listen, but also answer some questions, if you have questions.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the lands where each of us are today and are joining today and I'll acknowledge the ongoing connection of Aboriginal people to the land we now call New South Wales. I'd also like to pay my respects to elders, past and present, and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are joining us today.

We very much welcome you to this public hearing. It's a very important part of our consultation process on a draft report. We are very much keen to hear views and improve on our draft report, and we do appreciate you making the time to join the hearing today. So I'm looking forward to hearing what everyone has to say and to a productive hearing.

I might make a few opening remarks just to really ensure everyone has the background to this review, and you'll see the slide on the screen. Now that talks about our terms of reference.

For those who may not have dealt with IPART before. We're an independent tribunal and agency of the New South Wales government, and we make a lot of decisions independently about pricing so that people can get safe and reliable services at a fair price. And we also give the government advice on a range of matters where they need independent advice.

Turning to taxis, we do know that taxis are an integral part of urban mobility, offering convenience and speed and efficiency in door-to-door service for customers. They're an important option, we understand, for many members of society who find other forms of transport don't suit them. Fares for taxi caught from a rank or held from the street, are the subject of this review. They're the types of taxi services that are regulated by the Government because passengers of rank and hail services don't have the ability in the same way to shop around. As for booked services, so booked services by taxis as with hire cars and rideshare, are not regulated for this current review. The Minister for Transport has asked us to review the maximum fares for rank and hail Taxis under the Point to Point Transport Act and also we've been asked to consider fares from Taxi airport to the CBD.

We're making some draft recommendations as a result of the review so far, and as we finalise the review, there'll be final recommendations. But ultimately it is up to Transport for New South Wales to set maximum fares through a fares order. And the intention is that that would be from the 1st of July 2025.

So, as you can see from the screen our terms of reference ask us to deliver a report covering 4 main things, a pricing framework for maximum fares, and how to adjust them in the future, a methodology for Maxi taxi fares, to look at affordability and availability for taxis for people with disability and fare schedules for country versus urban areas. And then we also had an additional element to the terms of reference to look at Sydney airport fares.

So our draft report was released earlier this month on the 4th of March, and we are inviting submissions up until the 1st of April. And we very much welcome submissions which can be as short or as long as you like. But in addition, this public hearing is an opportunity to put your views to the Tribunal and to ask questions that might help you with your submission as well. I'd like to also acknowledge that the taxi industry has been through a lot of change. And we've taken that into account. And we're definitely as we've conducted the review and the way we've reviewed any recommendations that we've finalised to government, we will keep into account the changes in the taxi industry.

So we welcome you to this hearing. Before I hand over to Jennifer Vincent from the IPART team who'll give us a brief overview, I just wanted to give people an opportunity to introduce themselves. I understand, I think the Point to Point Transport Commissioner Anthony Wing is here. Just see if Anthony is here, and if he'd like to introduce himself and say a few words.

## 1.2 Introductions

**Anthony Wing:** Thanks, Carmel. Thank you very much for inviting me today. And so everyone who I haven't met, I'm Anthony Wing. I am the New South Wales Point to Point Transport Commissioner. Which means I'm the independent regulator for rideshare, taxis, hire cars and all sorts of other passenger transport and smaller vehicles, of which there are about 80 million trips done a year in New South Wales in these vehicles. So it's a very important part of the public transport system. And as the regulator, obviously, my primary focus is safety, we're regulating people for safety all up and down the industry. I'm currently prosecuting Uber in the courts for alleged safety breaches, and we prosecuted Didi, the other large global company here last year.

But we also spend a lot of time also looking after the safety of taxi drivers and of customers of taxis as well, and we also, of course, as part of our role, are dealing with that small minority of drivers who are not following the fares order that Carmel is talking about, and who are overcharging or refusing to use the meter for rank and hail work. So I think it's very important that this work is being done. We need to make sure that the amounts that are set by government for taxi drivers doing rank and hail work are sufficient for them to make a living, and I've noticed some of the proposals are also designed to actually encourage people to do short trips as well, and I think they'll be good to get some feedback on that.

We, of course, are dealing with the aftermath of it often. We have people out there on the streets, both in uniform and in plain clothes, just getting in the back of taxis and catching them, and we have issued more than a thousand fines over the last couple of years to taxi drivers who refuse to use the meter or overcharge. That's still a minority of the industry, and it's obviously doing harm to all the good drivers out there.

But we will continue to do that. We also have a hotline set up, and more than 3,000 people have got refunds from that through the last couple of years as well.

But I think, in addition to all the enforcement work that goes on that we are doing, I think, as I said, it's really good to look at the design upfront of the fare structure itself, to see what kind of incentives it gives people to not refuse trips, and to do short trips. And the other thing that I'm very pleased to see and thank you to IPART for looking at, this is the idea of fixed fares from the airport as well. It's something that I discussed with the Minister late last year and said, look, this could be a very good thing to do. Try and again make it very difficult for the minority of drivers who just want to overcharge people to get away with it, especially because the biggest problem right now is that many tourists and visitors and business travellers and others coming into Sydney Airport have no idea what they should actually be paying, so I think it's a really good thing to do.

We talked, and she asked IPART as the independent tribunal to provide advice on it, and I really hope everyone here will engage with this idea, because I think it's a great thing to see. It's something that I'm very supportive of, and I'm very pleased to see that we're having a full discussion with industry and the public about the whole range of options for taxi fares going forward.

So Carmel I might wind up there. I just hope that was a useful introduction, and it's great, it's great to be here today.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thanks, Anthony. I might just next see whether Geoff Ferris, who is here, who's the chairman of the New South Wales Taxi Council, would like to introduce himself.

**Geoff Ferris - Taxis NSW:** Thank you, Carmel. Thank you once again for today. Yes, my role is chairman of Taxis New South Wales, the old New South Wales Taxi Council, and I'm also president of the Country Taxi Operators Association. Our taxi business is in regional New South Wales. So we're the peak body for taxis in New South Wales, obviously have followed your inquiry very closely. We appreciate very much the time and effort you've allowed the industry to respond to what you're looking into and to take the industry's input. And I'm sure Nick will say some more about that. But we just like to say that we're very appreciative of the review that you're carrying out, and very hopeful that what will come out of it will be beneficial to the travelling public in New South Wales, and the operators of taxi rank and hail services.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thanks, Geoff, and you mentioned Nick Abraham, who's the CEO of Taxis New South Wales, Nick, would you like to introduce yourself?

**Nick Abraham:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning everyone, Nick Abraham, New South Wales Taxi Council. Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the Chair. We've got the Point to Point Transport Commissioner, our chairman as well, but also welcome more board members across IPART, Taxi New South Wales, CTOA as well. I noticed we've got some disability reference group members which we chair as well, and I'd like to call out and extend that g'day to them as well. Further to Geoff's point. I'd like to acknowledge and thank IPART for the process.

I would say the end-to-end process, because from the outset the collaboration and consultation carried out by IPART has been, has been great, and we've been involved in this industry for many, many years, and whilst you know, there may be a lot of history there, but I say, there's a new level of precedence that's been set here in regards to the way IPART has approached this this review process, and I just wanted to call that out, and even things like attending some of our workshops and contributing, attending to some of the regional meetings and workshops as well, and in particular I want to call out Jennifer, Martin and Tess, who have given up their time to do that from that perspective, but also thank our members who have been really contributing to this process, and as recent as Friday last week we had follow up workshops with the country and regional and Metro members in relation to obviously the IPART draft report to make sure that we come here today is not just what Geoff or I think, but, more importantly, what our members, what more broader industry is thinking from that perspective.

I do want to also note when you go through the report, you know, 80 pages of reading is never the most pleasant, but what was pleasing was to see the detail from IPART. The fact that they have been listening and hearing from industry around the key concerns, around the rising costs to operate and provide services, around driver shortage issues, around issues around regional viability and so forth, and what's and even one of the call outs that IPART made with the lack of change of taxi fares since 2014, you know the fact that IPART have even taken a look at their own processes and take a look around the role that they play within this, which I think is important.

When you look at the number of recommendations that have been made as well, you can see there is good intent to, really, you know, trying to close out the gap between, you know, looking at driver earnings and viability, which is important, but making sure that taxis remain affordable and competitive, which is fantastic to see. The only thing I would say without getting too specific in detail right now is, we do need to look at some of the methodologies. What IPART is proposing and say, look, maybe we need to maybe have more conversations, and part of today is a great step towards addressing some of this, so we all, I think, are aligned with where we want to get to, particularly around increasing short fare trips, helping our viability and keeping taxis affordable, and so forth,

But increasing flag fall for us, for example, \$3.60 to \$5.11, even industry is taking a step back and say, hang on, we're concerned that that's probably not in the best interest. From a consumer perspective, we'll look at that and the real way to address short fares as noted in your report around the short fare solution at Sydney Airport is a great way to couple this process from that perspective.

So the other thing is the scope which has been broadened for this review, particularly around information on receipts, Maxi fares, and so forth again, is a welcome relief to see that as a step forward, and as Anthony noted towards better compliance and enforcement, and helping improve that customer experience overall. So thank you again for the opportunity, and we look forward to hearing from IPART. But also more importantly, from industry representatives around this process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thank you, Nick. Now I would like in a few minutes to hand over to Jennifer, because, as Nick said, you know, it is a fairly dense report. We try and do our job well and put lots of detail in. But we do understand people may not have been able to get through the report yet. So if we give a presentation, we hope that will give people a bit of assistance to get across what it is that we're suggesting. We will have time for discussion after that. But I just will offer, if there's anyone else who at this stage, in the preliminaries, would like to introduce themselves, if you could put your digital hand up.

I'm just having a look to see if there's anyone who's looks like they'd like to speak.

Phil, Phil, over to you just to introduce yourself quickly.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, Western Sydney):** Yeah, I'm a bailee taxi driver in north western Sydney, and I'm here to put the perspective of people who actually drive the cabs.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thanks, Phil, and we'll have opportunities for you to give us your views, and I welcome them because that's an important perspective.

Is there anyone else who would like to introduce themselves just before we get underway with the presentation?

I'm just having a look. I don't know that there's anyone. So we'll hear from you later. So what I might do now is, keep us moving, and I'll hand over to Jennifer Vincent from IPART's team just to talk a bit more about the review and give you an overview and just set the scene for the discussion.

So thanks everyone. We'll hear from Jennifer, over to you, Jennifer.



### 1.3 IPART presentation

**Jennifer Vincent (IPART):** Thank you very much Carmel and I echo Andrew and Carmel's sentiments that we're very grateful to everybody here for the input you've had to date, and taking time to come to our public hearing this morning.

I'll just run through the main findings and recommendations of our draft report before handing over to the floor for discussion. And this is the very short version of the 80 pages that I welcome you to dive into. If you'd like a little useful bedtime reading.

So our approach is that we want to recommend fares that allow passengers to get rank and hail taxi services in a timely fashion at an appropriate price. Our approach to the review considered evidence about the balance of supply of taxi services and demand for rank and hail taxi services at current fare levels as well as other matters in our terms of reference which refers to the cost of providing services, the need for efficiency, consumer protection and social impact. And the evidence we looked at for supply and demand balance included our annual point to point transport passenger survey, which we've been doing since 2012. We looked at data from taxi ranks about how long taxis spend queuing as well as how long passengers spend queuing, data from the book and ride wheelchair accessible taxi booking service and evidence from submissions in response to our call for submissions. And from this evidence we concluded that taxi supply is generally able to meet passenger demand across New South Wales.

However, there's 3 instances where demand and supply appear to not be in balance at the moment. The 1st is wheelchair accessible services. We found that many passengers using wheelchairs face longer wait times and more no show experiences than passengers using standard taxis, and during the course of our review in December, as I'm sure most people here are aware, the Government announced a package of responses to the wheelchair accessible roundtables, which included a new lift fee of \$25, which has gone up from \$15, and there's additional public holiday and night rates. And we think this will encourage what drivers to prioritise wheelchair passengers

The second instance of demand and supply mismatch is services for people travelling short distances. We heard that passengers may be refused short trips or experience overcharging. Drivers also told us that they perceive fares for short trips are too low given their waiting time for them, particularly at the airport. Sorry, just excuse me for a minute. Sorry about that. My voice has Mondayitis.

And the 3rd instance of demand and supply mismatch is a case of oversupply of taxis at Sydney Airport. We found that drivers often queue up for hours at the airport which can lead to incentives for short fare refusal, or overcharging passengers to make up for the idle time. We considered this evidence when we were developing draft recommendations where we focused on rebalancing the flag fall and distance rate so that short trips are more rewarding for drivers, but long trips aren't as appealing.

And on this slide you can see our draft recommended fare schedules for both urban and country fares, and we consider that urban and country fares should remain on separate schedules, due to the difference in nature, mostly of trips in the urban and country areas. We recommend rebalancing the components of the urban fare schedule by increasing the flag, fall and decreasing the distance rate after 12 kilometres. That would result in short trips becoming slightly more expensive, while longer trips become cheaper with distance. Country fares would be 3 to 9% higher, depending on the length of the trip.

And these fare components in this draft recommended schedule also include a 2.2% increase across the board to reflect inflation forecasts for the year to the 1st of July 2025, because we've done our analysis based on 2024 experience. But fares won't apply until the 2025-26 financial year, and we also recommend annual CPI indexation going forward.

There's a variety of ways that fare components could be reweighted so that shorter trips become more expensive and longer trips cheaper without necessarily changing the average fare price or the revenue that drivers receive during a shift across the range of trips that they do during a shift.

So our draft recommendation is for a flag fall increase to \$5.11 and a 2% increase in the distance rate for the first 12 kilometres, which 12 kilometres is the point at which drivers identified what they considered to be the boundary, on average, between a short fare and a reasonable length fare when we did a survey of drivers in response to the call for submissions on fares from the airport. And then, after that 12 km, there'd be a reduction in the distance rate.

But we also considered 2 other options which we're very interested in getting feedback on, so same flag fall increase to \$5.11, but maintaining the current structure of a single distance rate that would be 3 and a half percent lower than the current distance rate, and option 3 is a larger flag fall increase to \$9 and a larger reduction in distance rate by 24% to \$1.75 per kilometre, and this option changes the relativity between short and long fares the most, and it's close to the current structure of standard rideshare fares which have a high implied flag fall. But of course, because rideshare fares aren't calculated in the same way as taxi fares the passenger doesn't ever see that breakdown.

We're very interested in your feedback across the 3 options. We've done some modelling of the impact of the options on outcomes for the industry as a whole as well as the impacts of the fare schedules on individual fares of different lengths. And for people who are interested, and I know, Nick said he was very interested in discussing the methodology, we're actually going to hold a technical workshop on the 20th of March to discuss the modelling analysis and methodology in more detail. And the registration link for that will be available on our website after this meeting, and we'd be happy to get further into the numbers around those different options at the technical workshop.

This slide just shows how those 3 alternative fare options would affect prices for taxi trips of different lengths. So the recommended option that's in the draft report and option 2 are roughly similar to current fare levels overall, but long trips become a bit cheaper and short trips up to about 5 kilometres in one case, and up to about 12 kilometres in another become more expensive. And option 3 obviously has the greatest impact on longer trips, which are quite a bit cheaper compared to current fee levels.

And then this the slide after this. Oh, sorry! This slide. Thanks, Claudio, for keeping pace, is a zoom in of the previous slide, which just shows for that 0 to 12 kilometre short fare distance. The difference between current fares and the 3 options that we look at in the draft report

And moving on to country fare regulation. As I mentioned, we think that urban and country fares should stay on different schedules, and the draft recommendation for country fares is an increase in the flag fall to \$5.11, which actually makes it the same as the urban flag fall, but we recommend maintaining the structure of country fares in terms of distance rate, and the draft recommendation includes that 2.2% uplift for inflation to the 1st of July 2025,

Turning to taxi services for wheelchair users. Wheelchair users have much longer waiting times, and many more no shows and fare refusals than users of standard taxis. Data from the book and ride service suggests that a large proportion of WATs don't log on to the Wheelchair taxi booking service. We recognise that the New South Wales Government package announced in December, which includes an increase to the lift fee, additional funding for the WAT interest-free Loan scheme, looking at booking service capabilities and exploring other models to provide wheelchair accessible transport services is an appropriate response to improving the level of services for people who require wheelchair accessible taxis. So at this stage, we haven't actually made any additional draft recommendations for within our area, in the terms of reference, in terms of fares, but we're interested in feedback on whether there is anything else fare related that could be done to improve services for wheelchair passengers.

As Carmel mentioned, the minister wrote to us and asked us to specifically consider fares for trips from Sydney Airport to destinations like CBD. And what we've ended up recommending is a trial of fixed fares from Sydney Airport to the CBD, defining the CBD as postcode 2,000. We're proposing a maximum fixed fare set at \$55 for standard taxis and \$75 for Maxi taxis. This fare is to apply to any rank and hail trip, leaving from either terminal at the airport to any destination within the 2000 postcode. This fare includes tolls, if any, the passenger service levy, the airport access fee, and any other fee or charge, except the non-cash payment surcharge, which can be charged on top if the payment is not by cash. That means that tolls and fees aren't passed through to the passenger. They are included in that fixed fare.

We recommend that the trial be conducted for 12 months, and the post-trial outcomes on taxi complaints and compliance data and effects on WAT availability be assessed to determine whether that fixed fare becomes more permanent.

We've also made a draft recommendation that Maxi taxis be permitted to charge the 50% surcharge if they've been requested at the airport taxi ranks, usually because of the amount of luggage a passenger or passenger group has, as well as where the passenger group is 5 or more people, which is the current trigger for the Maxi taxi surcharge.

We've also, coming out of our airport considerations, but this draft recommendation would apply in all cases for rank and hail taxi trips, we've recommended that receipts be required to set out a clear breakdown of the fare and other costs and provide identifying information about the taxi driver, ID and taxi service provider contact number or website to give more transparency around the fare, calculation, and certainty to passengers that they've been charged the correct amount.

And that is a very quick gallop through our draft findings and recommendations. I'm very interested to hear what the sector has to say, and as Carmel mentioned, you can make a written submission on the draft report by the 1st of April 2025, and we are holding that technical workshop on the 20th of March, and we're particularly interested in the 4 things we've flashed up on screen. but you're free to raise any matter that you'd like to that's in the draft report. But certainly today we'd like to make sure that we do touch on at least these 4 things, and on the itemisation of receipts as well, and so I might hand over to Andrew to start our Q&A session.

## 1.4 Discussion

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Great. Thank you, Jennifer. And as Jennifer mentioned in a moment I'll open discussion to the floor, and we very much encourage everyone to share your views or to ask questions as I outlined at the outset. If I can just remind everyone that we should try and give everyone a chance to have their turn to talk so if you could keep your comments as succinct as possible, and also, if we can remain respectful as is appropriate in a forum such as this, just so that everybody has the opportunity to put their views forward.

Now we are using the chat box in zoom, so if you could let us know your question by either entering your question or your name and organization into the chat box, we will aim to come to you as quickly as we can, or you can virtually raise your hand, and I will aim to come around to you as best as I can in the correct order.

And when you are asking your question or raising your point, if you could say your name, and where applicable your organisation, so just a reminder, drop any questions into the chat, and we'll come to you. Put your name into the chat, and I'll come to you or put your hand up.

And I see we have our 1st hand up today. Over to you, Phil.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, Western Sydney):** Yes, good morning. My name is Phil Doyle. I'm a Bailey taxi driver in North Western Sydney. I've been driving cabs for the better part of 15 years, and I have to say that this draft report has left bailee taxi drivers pretty angry.

The finding that there's balance in the supply and demand for taxi services is just simply delusional. Last year I earned \$28,000 driving a taxi full time. The tax office, if you don't believe me, the tax office figure for taxi drivers driving full time is around \$35,000 for a year. Now you can't live in the Sydney basin on \$28,000 a year. It's well below the Henderson poverty line, and it involves a lot of the drivers are living 2 to 3 to a room, 2 or 3 families to a house. That's the sort of standard of living we're talking about the taxi drivers are experiencing.

The analysis for the cost of providing a taxi service is just wrong. Yes, our incomes are down, our incomes are down over the last 10 years, but our costs have gone up, and not just the costs associated with taxis, but the cost of living. We don't live in a box between shifts. We're human beings and rents at the bottom end of the market have almost tripled since 2012. I know, I rent.

And you know plate expenses were never a cost for bailee drivers. So that disappearing has been no event to us, and we've received no compensation for the impact of Uber's predatory pricing over the last 10 years, and you could never get rich off driving a cab, but you could make a living off it. And you can't do that anymore. And I remind you that bailee taxi drivers have no paid sick leave, no superannuation. I've had no superannuation for 15 years.

And your balance, your supply and demand balance is based on someone earning \$30,000 a year. Who can expect to be shot, vomited on, assaulted, abused, spat on, mocked.

We're also there to help people to get to things like dialysis, help people escape domestic violence, deal with the free-range psychiatric institutions that are our public housing estates and to help get people to cancer treatment and other important medical appointments to allow the elderly and those living with disabilities to have some semblance of independence.

Balance is based on exploiting drivers basically largely 1st generation migrants, but also people like myself. And this balance leads to a high turnover in drivers, because the increase in unacculturated drivers that are coming into this industry. They're unfamiliar, not just with the geography of Sydney, but with colloquial English and the cultural standards we expect. And you see, this example exhibited in things like assistance animals. We've got a regular who's vision impaired, and he has an assistance dog, and at Blacktown rank the driver suggested that the dog could travel in the boot.

We've also. I've got a 21-year-old daughter. Now let's you speak to any woman under 30 about their experiences of rideshare and taxis, and every 100% of them will have a story of coming across some "creepazoid". And that's the sort of people that are attracted when you pay people 30 grand a year.

Melbourne University did a study on Uber drivers, and it showed that the median tenure was around just under 4 months and 95% of the drivers were looking for another job. This report will drag this industry down to that standard. And as with Uber drivers, these increasingly transient drivers will seek to actively take advantage of passengers, especially vulnerable ones, and all the point-to-point enforcement officers in the world, with their cosplay stab-proof vest won't do anything because these people just move on to another industry and start ripping people off there as well, too.

Because that's what you're going to do, you'll get rid of, you'll drive vocational drivers out of this industry. People like me, who've got up at 3 o'clock in the morning for the last 12 years and gone and driven a cab.

And we've had 10 years of drivers, taxi drivers, incomes being undermined by predatory pricing and a violent increase in the in the standard of living. And if I break into your house and stole 30% of your annual income that'd be called theft, yet that's exactly what's happened to bailee taxi drivers in New South Wales.

We need a 30% increase to our incomes. 30% increase in fares just to survive in Sydney, and the 30% won't cut demand because people don't catch taxis as a recreational activity. People catch taxis because they need to get from A to B. I mean, section 2.5 of your report states if fares are not at a sufficient level to cover costs, drivers and taxi service providers will reduce or withdraw supply. Well, that's what's happening.

I don't know if you've noticed, even, Nick said in his introduction. There's a shortage of taxi drivers out there. You can't get people to do it. And when I mean, you know, it should be obvious. I mean, my mate Mel can bloody see it, who I carry around with his lovely dog, and we see drivers gone from 900 before Covid to around 500 now, and, as was alluded to, a lot of them don't even log on to the wheelchairs system, because, you know, it's not worth their time. In Hawkesbury we've gone in the 10 years, last 10 years we've gone from 15 taxis to 4.

I mean, this is this is a report of the North Shore and Eastern Suburbs for the North Shore and the Eastern Suburbs. This Tribunal needs to be reminded that the geographical centre of Sydney is Pendle Hill. And that's without getting into the geographical center of New South Wales, and what's required for country taxi operators. You try and get a cab in Riverstone or Cranebrook or Airds, can't be done.

You know this is an industry that can't service. We had people at South Maroota, which is less than 30 km from the GPO. Took them 4 days 4 days to get a taxi. 4 days.

How's good is that now? We have to constantly knock back jobs in the Hawkesbury because we physically can't do them. We don't have enough cabs. We don't have enough cabs to get to people. And that's heartbreaking, because, you know, Western Sydney has long distances and poor public transport. So people rely especially the vulnerable. Rely on taxis to get around. And you're talking about cutting the long-distance rate. So we're further disadvantaged, further disadvantage to operate taxis in these areas.

And you know, as for wheelchair taxis, you're proposing a lift fee, that is 20% lower than Victoria. And there's no partial lifting fee as they got in Victoria for folding wheelchairs to take the pressure off the WAT system. The WAT system that's failing. Speak to Wheelchairs Australia. It's failing, it's not working. And I mean, there's no recommendation of WAT training should be free or on demand. We've got a driver who wants to do WAT training. You can't get trained. You can't get trained. They won't run the course unless they get enough numbers. I mean, the Government can provide 10,000 WAT vehicles with gold, plated bumper bars, and a horn that plays the Hallelujah chorus, but it doesn't matter a jot if there's no drivers to do it.

I mean, I want to keep driving a taxi, but I can't afford to if this report is adopted. I can't meet the rent and expenses while living on \$28,000 a year. Last month I missed my daughter's 21<sup>st</sup>. I haven't had a holiday since 2018.

I don't need some passive, aggressive 'well, that's your choice, you know, to be in this industry.' That language that's a cop-out that's used by, you know, sociopaths to justify, you know, destroying other people's lives. On top of everything else, we don't need to be blamed for our own oppression. And, as you may remember from the first the 1st meeting we had, I was the driver that got shot in Riverstone in 2021, and I've been driving, you know, for the length of time that I've been driving a taxi, if I'm going to go broke I'll go broke sitting on the lounge at home, not, you know, driving around Mount Druitt at 5 am with some agitated meth addict.

You know this industry is like a blocked toilet at the moment. And this this process is an opportunity to fix that and you know we deserve better than being treated in the way that we have. If you want balance, taxi drivers need a 30% increase in fares to attract better quality drivers, and especially to help the vulnerable people in our communities that need our hard work. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you very much, Phil. And oh, Camel, did you want to say something.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Yeah, I will. I will. I'll just say, Phil, look, thank you. For being so upfront with your feedback and we do understand the important role that taxis play with many of the passengers around New South Wales.



I've made a few notes that I will ask that we look at before we finalize the report and clearly address cost of living. Looking more at the turnover and shortage of drivers. The waiting time for passengers, particularly in the wider areas around Sydney Central Coast to Western Sydney. Your point about disadvantage from the long-distance rate for particularly those passengers in wider Sydney metro. Your concern about the WAT lift fee and suggesting we have a look at Victoria in the comparison but also looking at training. And certainly, I think we've heard loud and clear your view about the need for a 30% uplift.

So we're still obviously working on this review, and it's an important part of the feedback that we look at further aspects that are raised. So we'll have a look at those matters. So thank you, Phil.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you, Phil, for that forthrightly, very open approach. We really do value getting input. It does help us in the review process.

If I can now go to David before I go to the comment in the chat. David.

**David Samuel:** Thank you, Andrew, and sorry I missed some of the start, Andrew, and the Tribunal because I was having some rather significant technical problems.

So I'm just on my phone, which is making this a bit challenging to put stuff into a comment box. Just want to quickly start broadly on Phil's points. I think Phil's right. And I think there's an assumption within government and community right around this country that you'll just keep finding people who want to do this and do it at the lowest possible price, and we keep receiving the lowest common denominator in terms of those people that are able to do this job, which is a very important job, as Phil pointed out. And I think there's a glaring issue here that is not being addressed anywhere. And it's probably not IPART's role. But we have 2 sections of this industry. Now we have one called Rideshare, who can do as they please, charge what they want, behave in any way that they see fit. And we have another section of the industry called taxi, who carry all the social obligations, all the obligations to provide the service we've all been used to, and we're trying to pretend those 2 systems can coexist when really, unless they're on the same level playing field at a regulatory level, is just not possible for the same service to operate in 2 very different regulatory environments, and I only have to go as far as CTP Insurance as a classic example of that, and the failure of the New South Wales Government over the last 10 years to deal with that issue, and the gross inequity between what a rideshare driver pays for CTP. And what a taxi driver has to pay if we want to bring the fares down as it's been suggested in some parts of the report we have to look at bringing the costs down.

Because, as Phil points out, the costs haven't gone down over the last 20 years. They've gone up and over the last 12 months exponentially. So I think that's an issue we have to all look at. And if we want this, if we want the price point to be at a point where it makes the community happy and governments happy, then we also have to find ways to lower the cost of providing the service, and, as Phil said, in some cases a very critical service.

Andrew, I'll just quickly go through some of the more technical points in the report. Just start with the airport flat fare. I understand, the Minister asked the Tribunal to investigate this, and it's not an easy thing to investigate. Putting a ring around a certain area in a major city is not easy to do. I would point out, though, that we don't want to create problems that don't exist in doing so. So I'm not quite sure where the data is that suggests we really need a fixed fare into Sydney CBD. If there's data that says drivers are refusing those fares, I wouldn't have thought there the fares being refused. As a company, we're more than open to supporting a proposal like that as long as the impact is neutral, and I don't think setting the price at \$55 will present a neutral outcome. I think drivers will avoid that work. When we look at that \$55 we've got to remember, not all of that money goes to the taxi driver. We've got toll roads. We've got excessive airport charges on that trip. We've got all sorts of other people chipping in and taking money out of that fare box. So by the time the driver gets there they're not getting \$55. So I think we just need to keep that in mind and be sensible and say it's a fairly big area with a short and longer variance within it in terms of the trip length. So we think something around the \$70 mark would be a fairer price point for that, and we're happy to go through that as a part of our submissions, etc. by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

So that would just be 1 point there. The other is the demographic that travels and does that trip. They don't tend to be the downtrodden people. They do tend to be business clients and people that can afford to pay for that service, and for those that can't there are still train services and other services that can be used, although they're quite expensive, too obviously. But at the end of the day, we don't want to create a problem that doesn't exist. Now by trying to do something new, we want to improve the service as a result of doing something new.

So I just point that out to the Tribunal in terms of the flag fall. I think Phil, covered off on this. I just think flag falls are too high at 5 to \$9 way too high. I think we need to replace flag falls with a minimum fare, and same goes for the airport. Let's remove flag falls, and all these complicated things that get stuck on a meter, and the passengers paying \$12 by the time they've left the airport and implement a minimum fare for using a point to point service in New South Wales, and I think that can go across Rideshare as well personally. But obviously the Tribunal has jurisdiction to look at taxis here, but I think we've got to move away from these large flag falls.

I think the distance rate coming down is a bit commercially naive. In some ways the trip doesn't get cheaper for the driver or the operator. The further the car goes, it gets more expensive. So with public transport, for example, you may well want to bring the price down over distance, because people travelling further out are generally people with less money, so it's equitable to do so. And they also have less transport options. With taxi, someone's still got to privately fund that trip. So someone's got to put tyres on the car. They've got to pay for the fuel, and after a certain distance the price doesn't start coming down and providing that service. So I don't think it's necessarily accurate to suggest that that would be an effective model. I know people are trying to stop short fare refusal by front ending the fare. I get that. But I think we're rewarding bad behaviour and a bad model if we do that. And, as I said, I think a flat, a minimum price on taxi fares would be a better way to go



Just quickly on the WATs problem. Yeah, WATs are a massive issue in New South Wales, our Newcastle fleet, and we're the sole provider at A2B Australia, and 13Cabs are providing taxis in the Newcastle area. Our fleet's gone from 44 taxis 3 years ago to 17 taxis. Last week I've reached out to the Point to Point Transport Commission, but these operators and drivers simply cannot afford to pay the cost of running these services. The CTP alone is massive. The fuel bill is large because they're not hybrid or modern fuel types. They're all just unleaded vehicles or Diesel vehicles which increase costs. I do agree with Phil, too, that there's no reason for a lift fee to be different in one State from another, in my opinion. So Victoria has the highest, and guess what Victoria has the best WAT service. Now, there's lots of issues in Victoria don't get me wrong, I live in Melbourne, but at the end of the day the WAT service in Victoria is far superior to any other city in Australia that I've witnessed outside of perhaps a place like Adelaide, which still isn't great these days, anyway. But the whole WAT model is collapsing and it's collapsing around us. There is no longer a social obligation under a deregulated licensing market to go and get yourself a WAT licence. People used to do it because they couldn't get a standard one, that wasn't great as it was, but now why would a driver choose to go and get a wheelchair accessible taxi when it costs \$120,000, and just as much to run where you could buy a Camry for \$30,000 and do conventional work, which is actually easier. It's great that people like Phil want to help people. I think that's fantastic. But you can't base a business model on it. You have to base a business model on the idea that you drive profit from providing a good service, not rely on people's goodwill like Phil's goodwill to go and support people in the community that need it.

As I say, Andrew, I appreciate the report. We will provide with a thorough response, with some of that stuff outlined in it, and I'll let someone else have a go.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you, David, appreciate you covering all of those key points, and also reminding that we are having a technical workshop on those questions around getting the flag fall on the distance. Right? So hopefully, David or someone from your company can be part of that. I'll come to Daniel just after I come to one comment online from B. Farid, if I've got that name correct, which I think is a suggestion that we have an off peak fair for the for the fixed trial. I don't know if anyone wanted to speak to that. I'm not putting people on the spot. If you feel more comfortable, putting your comments online and just leaving it at that, that's fine. So unless somebody wants to speak to that point, I might jump to Daniel.

**Daniel Peric (TWU NSW):** Good morning, everybody. My name is Daniel. I'm from the Transport Workers Union of New South Wales. I'm not going to take up too much time, because overall I think I could echo a lot of the points that both Phil and David raised.

But I want to begin by thanking IPART for the opportunity to speak at this hearing today, and for all the work they put into the report. I can see it's a very in-depth report, and I imagine a lot of complicated work has gone into that.

Overall, I think, without trying to parrot too much of what Phil and David were saying, because I believe they are correct in everything they've said, I think the increases and recommendations when it comes to the increases proposed by the draft aren't necessarily addressing the cost, impositions and challenges that bailees have faced over the last decade and by extension, I think, with the current draft recommendations that there's going to be a real struggle in actually facilitating traditional point to point transport as a long term vocation for drivers. Right? I think it was, I think it was David that mentioned, or maybe it was Phil that mentioned, you can't just assume that there are always going to be people around that are willing to do this work because you just can't. And this is especially true with rideshare as an adjacent point in this industry, and I know that the report states, and perhaps rightfully so, that the topic of Rideshare and all the issues going on in that space is beyond its terms of reference. I think it may be worth the final report, if it's beyond the scope of the terms of reference, it may be worth a final report, perhaps pitching a recommendation to the government of some kind to just kind of broadly adopt a holistic approach in viewing Rideshare as its own sort of review. If this report itself can't actually address the issues in Rideshare.

But if I can just go back to the long cutting the long term distance right? I think such a concept might be viable to say in the Sydney CBD. And surrounding satellites. But I don't think it's going to work in practice for Western Sydney or the outer Sydney Orbital. I don't necessarily think that's going to work. And yeah, look, I don't want to take up too much time, given the fact that there are so many people in here I'm sure that want to share their perspective. So a lot of what the TWU has to provide, we will do so in our follow up submission. Given that, we did a submission for the initial phase, we will do one as a follow up this draft, but I think that the final report may benefit from at least a loose recommendation to the Government to perhaps look into the regulation of Rideshare as a mode of transport that mirrors our traditional point to point transport like taxis, and again I would echo a lot of the sentiments brought up by Phil and David. But yes, we'll provide an in-depth submission. So thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thanks, Daniel. And also, David. I thank you personally as well for your input. Daniel, do you mind if I ask a question?

I've picked up a number of the points, and I recognize some of them are overlapping with what David and Phil have said. But in talking about review more broadly of rideshare, I would just like to understand from the perspective of a Tribunal member, the fact that only the rank and hail fares are regulated, and that that's what our review is covering. In terms of the work of rideshare drivers, which is the booked services, the taxi drivers, bailees do have the opportunity to do that sort of booked work as well.

What is the concern, I suppose? Is there potential for more earnings in competing with rideshare in the booked services? Or am I to understand, you think that there should be more regulation of booked services overall that would apply to both taxi drivers and rideshare and hire cars. I'm just sorry I didn't explain that very well, but I just thought I'd probably better drill down and get a sense of what your thoughts were on that.

**Daniel Peric (TWU NSW):** Sure, and I apologize because I understand I didn't go into too much detail. But that's also given everyone else in this call. But the fact that I think all the details and the TWU's initial submission, but effectively, what we're trying to say is, I suppose you're correct in that last statement where we want there to be an even playing field. So if that means having rideshare kind of brought to the same regulatory standard in terms of pricing that we have in traditional point to point transport, then that could be an alternative. I don't necessarily have all the answers here, but it's more so about getting the industry together to put our heads together and come to a solution. Because currently, what Rideshare can do is, platforms like Uber, for example, have the ability to manipulate their own prices, they'll rise if they want to raise it, they can. If they want to lower it they can. Whereas here, in traditional point to point transport, we don't necessarily have that luxury.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Yeah. So I do remember from our first public hearing from the issues paper. So you're touching on that. So my understanding is that in the same way that Rideshare drivers can vary their charges for booked services, taxi drivers can do the same thing.

So we're not being asked to recommend on capping those. But Phil, shaking his head, so is it just that that doesn't happen in practice, because passengers know what the regulated fees are. I'd like to just understand this point, because it is obviously more to it.

**David Samuel:** Yeah, because the technology is different. So a ride share driver has the technology combined within their phone. Now, we can do that but neither a company like 13 cabs, or a company like Uber. In those cases are the drivers adjusting the price, the companies are adjusting the price. Now, a driver. What we're what everyone is complaining about in Sydney right now is drivers doing just that at taxi ranks. They're adjusting the price that they think they should be able to charge for that trip. So the regulated price almost acts like a baseline across industry. So yes, we, as a company, can charge more for our booked services than we do would for a rank and hail for the same job. That's exceptionally confusing for customers when going out with \$20 and going home is 40. We do charge slightly different rates. I won't lie to you about that. We have a different tariff model for our book jobs than we do for our rank and hail. But they're not vastly different. And we have a ceiling on what we can do essentially, because consumers expect, just through expectation, that taxis will be in a certain band, and I think even Rideshare have now brought that bound down where they're not going as high as they used to with their surges. They've lifted their base brought the top down. But my final point on this, without wanting to waste your time would be that the delineation between a book service and a rank and house service is disappearing at a rate of knots.

So it is much, much easier now to open your phone. You can book one of our cars. You can book an Uber, you can compare price. There's all sorts of challenges in that space. And as industry, that's what we've got to deal with. But fundamentally they're providing the same service at vastly different prices at the same time of day in the same place. And that's concerning for consumers. And it's driving down driver earnings because big companies can afford to cross-subsidize that loss and undercut smaller companies in terms of what they charge.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, western Sydney):** Yeah, so look, thanks, thanks very much.

Just it's very simple. What it is. What this hearing is about is about metered fares. Major players in any form, like whether it's booked or whether it's picked up on the street, or whether you're getting a wheelchair, it's meter. It's where the meter running. That's what you're regulating the meter. That's it is because we use the meter, and the meter is set to what you find. Your findings will set the meter to that. Our meter, if we're doing a book job, we're running it on the meter because we get the job from Premier or I get the job from Richmond taxis. If someone gets in unless they're a regular, you know, we're running the meter. And we're running on the recommendation of IPART.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Okay. Well, I think that's important for us to pick up, because on a kind of legal level, we're only being asked to set the rank and hail. But what you're saying is on a practical level, you're using the meter. That's how the meter is set up. So it's in practice, applying more broadly.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, western Sydney):** Far more broadly, about 95% of our jobs are metered jobs.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** All right. Thanks for that, because it does clarify the situation, the context that we're working in.

I'm sorry if I took us all off track with my questions there, and, Andrew, I'll hand back to you. I can see Nick's got his hand up. But you're a better MC.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** So that's very helpful also to understand that point. Nick?

**Nick Abraham:** Thanks. Thanks, Andrew. So a few points I wanna make just further to what's already been discussed without sounding too repetitive. In the report, a couple of things that you want to pick up from the report itself as well, just to give it a clearer lay of the land picture.

And I think the data that you've got on there, correct me if I'm wrong, is to August 2024, where it talks about the number of licenses or taxis operating has increased since the deregulation of licenses, and that was the case to August 2024, I can tell you, as at the end of January we've seen over 200 taxis come off the road since 12 months of the prior period. So just to give you some latest insight on, and that's August to January was about maybe a 3 or 4 month period, we've seen a massive shift in the number of taxis coming off the road, and we'll talk about some of those drivers there while I'm talking stats. I do want to call something out and from a number of drivers perspective. And I do apologize because I think this information came off our website and we will update that information. It talks about 30,000, up to 30,000 drivers. There's no way in in the world we've even got a 3rd of that at the moment. So we'll probably have less than 10,000 drivers. Jennifer, sorry about that, and I know you referenced our website on that we'll update that information and I'll we'll get that corrected. But just for the record there's less than probably 10,000 drivers in across New South Wales.

Something I noticed, which is, I think, a positive thing in the in the report where IPART benchmarks against other States, and I think that's a great way to look. And already David mentioned about the lift fee and other things. But one of the things that I do want to call out, is the night rate. We talk about the challenge of getting drivers. That's a real challenge right across the board any time of the day. But when it comes to the evening it's even a bigger problem. And I talk about country and regional New South Wales as well as Metro getting night drivers on the road. It can be a real challenge, and I know New South Wales is still being recommended to keep their nighttime rate at 10 pm. And you've got other States like Victoria at 5 pm. Queensland, 7 pm. South Australia, 7 pm, and WA 6 pm. I think that's something we need to take a good, hard look at and say, well, you know why, you know we've noted flag fall and other things that we are behind other States. But this is one important area, particularly when we're trying to encourage services at nights, particularly when other services are reduced or not operating. So that's just something we would like to call out on that perspective.

There is also reference in the report, and I don't know where it came from, but it says that for the taxi industry, the rank, and how segment is becoming less important. Rank and hail is more important today than it's ever been. David noted the regulations, the regulatory requirements and standards that taxis have to carry and implement because of the fact that the rank and hail is such an important service that many people still rely on, even in country New South Wales, in some areas rank and hail may only be 5 to 20% of the total fares. But it's such an important part of that from that perspective. So getting things like the pricing structure right is really important.

And when you talk about the linking with booked fares, I can't reiterate how important that is. Majority or many, many service providers actually do align their rank and hail rates with their book rate. Sure, there might be additional booking fee, or other surcharges that may apply. But, generally speaking. So again, I keep talking about little old Mary in the regional town that leaves \$10 in her wallet or \$15, because she knows that's what's going to get her home. And that's the same with little old Mary out West or Hawkesbury, or wherever it may be that certainty is really important. So to what Phil was saying about the metered fare, that's something that we've been against the traditional dynamic pricing and surging that Rideshare have always delivered, and that consistency and certainty we give passengers has been something. This is why we have many loyal passengers because of that certainty and consistency.

To that point I just want to touch on a bit of a change in view, because when we talk about fares for rank and hail, there's this thing about, you know, trying to keep it competitive with booked fares, and we know that ride shares sometimes can be less when they're not surging and so forth. Isn't there a price for instant service? There's a price. Rank and hail is instant service. When somebody going up to this, you know, rank or picking up off the street. It is an instant service. So if I go online now and I want to order something, it might take 5 to 10 days. But if I want it tomorrow, I'm gonna pay extra for that. Or if I you know, using that yeah, analogy or regards to deliveries regards to, you know, mail. Yeah, I remember being in Queensland, you know we went to Wet and Wild, and you know you pay a certain price for a ticket, and you gotta line up for that ticket, and you gotta wait to get your turn. But if I wanted to jump the queue, I could jump the queue, buy an express ticket, but I'd have to pay more for it, and there should be a link to accept. So this fear, now, we don't want to price ourselves out of the market. Let's be very clear on that. We want to remain competitive. But let's not hold ourselves back to say "this is the line in the sand", because, you know, you might be cheaper at certain times, and so forth. There is a price for instant service, and I think that's something that we need to need to be mindful of the other thing.

Just 2 things quickly. In country and regional New South Wales, we are seeing services either reduce or close down almost on a monthly basis. Now, I'm having to report back to my boards on these services, unfortunately, that are closing or changing services, and because of the costs, and as noted earlier, with CTPs, registrations, and insurances. You got the same cars, providing same services by the same drivers, paying a 10th of the cost that taxis have to pay. So what are they doing? Taking the livery, taking the roof, sign off, converting those cars into, or taxis into private hire vehicles, and continuing with those services which is obviously leaving a town with a disadvantage, because the times when those services were needed at most, they're now no longer viable and can afford to continue to run their services. So that's really an important point from that perspective.

And the last thing I wanted to make around short fares, and I applaud IPART for wanting to improve the customer experience around short fares. I think we all want to improve the customer experience around short fares. But if you look at the airport for a moment and you look at the short fare, and I know the idea of increasing that flag for is to encourage short fares. But when you look at the Sydney airport just very quickly, a driver might be waiting for, what do we say? Average maybe up to 2 hours, gets a fare to Zetland or Alexandria. Let's say it might be 25 to \$30. From that perspective you take about, take away the \$5.75 or 5.80 access fee. Take away the 1.32 PSL, and so forth. There's over \$7 in costs just in that 25 to \$30 fare. They're left with about \$11.50 an hour. And my 14 year old can go get a job tomorrow and earn more than \$11.50 an hour, and these are some of the things. So even if we add the \$1.50 flag which we think is a big jump in that perspective, it's not going to really solve that problem. Like I said, we gotta look at the fares. We got to get the fair structure right.

So to David's point, the meter shock is a big issue and increasing it to \$5.11. I don't think it's going to do it. We do need to rework the fares order without reducing the additional kilometre rate. We need to increase the kilometres from that perspective, so that the driver earnings can be catered for by still keeping fares affordable. But we do need a short fare system, and this is an airport issue, but something that needs to come through so increasing the flag fall, that amount isn't gonna solve our short fare scenario, anyway. So just a couple of points I wanted to note on that. There's many others there, but I'll leave it for our submission as well. That's what we will be making.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Alright. Thank you, Nick. I want to comment on that.

Thank you, you made all those points very well, and look forward to your submission on those key points. And certainly, you know, getting that balance right with short and long distance is something that we're turning our mind to. And, as you would see, we've got a few options there that we've considered but very open to looking at other options as well as we get this feedback. So thank you very much for that input. We look forward to it.

Now, is there any other comments that anyone would make. Michael? Just on mute Michael.



**Michael Jools (Taxi Drivers Association):** Yes, thanks for the opportunity. The one we've got several issues with the report, and I will detail them in our complete submission., but the 1st point I would make is that the focus on having a lower second rate distance tariff, that is, after the 12 kilometres is chiefly argued by IPART to remedy the problem at the airport. But the airport, important as it is, still represents 10 to 15% of the total fares. You are now imposing on the rest of the travel around Sydney a reduction in the distance fares to solve a problem that only exists at the airport. That's neither fair nor reasonable, and I think that the fixed fare will do something to recover that, but I think there should be one distance for here and it should be at that \$2.34 rate given you're suggesting an increase in the start fee, but to disadvantage 85% of the taxi drivers in their trips other than from the airport simply to remedy the problem at the airport is not fair.

I also think that the issue about the country fares, the justification you have, and you nominate that justification of increased costs for country operations is logically at odds with the fact that you refuse or decide not to investigate the costs for urban fares. IPART has deliberately chosen to not investigate the cost structure of the taxi industry. They say, basically, it's a supply and demand issue. If you're not making enough money, get out. And I don't believe that's good enough, because it's not really an option for most drivers or operators. So I think that you do need to in the final, in the final submissions, have another look at the cost structure. Because the cost of operating the system is one of the parameters given to you by government as a matter to investigate. You have not investigated the cost structure for taxi drivers or their operators.

The other issue I would take up on the fixed fare. Is that a good meter properly regulated, is, I think, better and fairer than a fixed fare. If we have to have a fixed fare trial, it needs to be, as I think, David suggested, at least \$70 for a taxi, and to me, for me at least \$100 for a maxi. As the fare from the airport to a fairly nebulous area in the city, there's lots of little issues. The Blue Hotel is a hundred meters outside the boundary, the Casino is another 100 meters outside the boundary. The factors that you have of having one postcode as being the determinant leads to a lot of inconsistencies, and the issue is that you have nominated a typical fare as being what you derive your 55, and \$75 from. But it's not necessarily an average fare. The average trip for a taxi from the airport occurs in peak hours. It occurs on a Monday morning up to 10 o'clock. It involves necessarily a lot of traffic, and that traffic adds to the fare. So if we are to have a fixed fare, fine trial it but make it 70 bucks and a hundred bucks. We will be supplying much more detail in our submission from the Taxi Drivers Association. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you, Michael, for raising those points, and we will look forward to your submission. And certainly you're the 1st one today to raise the question of getting the boundary right. And certainly that's a question that we've been turning our mind to. And we're alive to those sort of border issues so very happy for anyone to put forward some other ideas around that. So thank you for those points, Michael. Appreciate it, Fred. I think you're next.

**Fred Lukabyo:** Thank you, Andrew. I'd like to thank the Tribunal members and the Secretariat for their serious work on this one. Great to see people present here, representing all part of our group of passengers with disabilities, which is a key thing.

Just a couple of quick things. Number one, a very big thank you to the Secretariat for agreeing to have a technical meeting. There are some issues which would otherwise drag everybody down here, and the ones I've flagged for that technical meeting are ones about assumptions on the price, elasticity of demand around increasing the flag by such an amount.

It is 10 years since a substantial fare rise for taxis in New South Wales. Passengers haven't seen that, because passengers see passenger service levies. Passengers see huge increase in toll roads, and so forth. Passengers don't see that from a driver perspective the fares haven't increased for a decade, and we can't find any evidence of having looked at other cases of the increase being so substantial, and what happened to rank and hail demand. There are limited abilities for us to use the rideshare model, as the report suggests may be an option for that comparison of a larger, a larger start cost simply because of the difference between a rideshare, fixed price and the sticker shock or meter shock of, you get in, the meter is already this, and then it starts ticking. This is not an experience which occurs in a in a rideshare, and it has a particular effect on passengers.

Further to this I'll flag some issues which no doubt will be raised in submissions. They include the nature of the fixed fare airport as a trial, and what that means to all of us before, after what we'd be looking for. What a trial, what a trial means. And the impact on choice of route which may happen from the price that's been quoted here because we now have people who go to or from city via different tolling options with the with the tolling options now open, and we don't want to be influencing the choice of route, because the driver does or doesn't want to have to pay a toll. In a \$55 fare believe me when I say the toll amount is non-trivial. If a driver gets the same \$55 from which he or she has to pay an airport fee exceeding \$5, a passenger service levy, the amount left in the rest can be reduced by 20% based on the choice of route. And with fixed fares, that's always an issue if the fixed fares don't include toll amounts. There are tiny technical issues around crossover speed when there's multiple different distance rates in a fare. A few petty things like that which I'm very happy for the opportunity to take up with the Secretariat at a technical meeting.

I'll just close by saying, sort of who I am. My name is Fred Lukabyo. I'm an industry consultant, and I'm appearing here for GM Cabs.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Great. Thank you, Fred. Yes, we did think that having a technical workshop would enable this hearing to focus a little bit more on the strategic issues but allow you to get under the hood and really understand some of those you know, the ways different options drive particular behaviours. So it'd be great to have Fred or someone from your organization at that workshop as well. I think we've now got a way of jumping online and registering for that. So encourage anyone here to do that if they could.

You mentioned having some reps here who are representing people with disabilities. I'm just throwing it open now, while we've still got some time, we've got about half an hour left for discussion on the approach on wheelchair accessible taxis, just wondering if anyone wanted to raise either questions or comments about the approach that we've taken here, or any other general issues on. Michael?



**Michael Jools (Taxi Drivers Association):** Yes, thank you, again. We have thought and considered considerably the issue of WAT vehicles, and we have proposed, both initially to IPART and to Government that the TTSS scheme should be encouraged and pushed forward to actually increase the number of trips and demand by government covering not 50% of the value of the trip, but 100% of the value of the trip. By comparison, public transport generally is subsidized by government to the tune of about 75%. We only raise 25% through fares to pay for the cost of providing public transport. Government pays a huge subsidy. In the case of the disabled, a disabled passenger can spend more in one day than a commuter on a capped fare, courtesy of the Government, in a whole week. They are enormously disadvantaged. If we were to increase the subsidy on the TTSS for WAT vehicles in particular, and maybe for the M40 or the non wheelchair vehicles to 100% of the fare. This would blow a fair bit of the budget but it would give a fair deal to an immensely disadvantaged number of our customers, the disabled people.

We would also suggest that the lift fee should be 50 bucks flat. In many cases there is reference where, and even in the Industrial Relations Act, where there's not meant to be a surcharge or a cost added to the remuneration of drivers for the day of the week that they are driving.

It seems to me that yes, it's nice to get \$50 for working on Christmas Day, and I've done it. But I think that what is really needed is that \$50 be the flat lift fee for what's general. It's immensely difficult for a WAT driver to do more than 5 or 6 jobs a day. There isn't the demand throughout the day for WAT work. He can't any, and physically, it's very difficult to do much more than about 4 or 5 or 6 trips from a cost point of view. He cannot cover his costs of operation currently. And that's why we are seeing the decrease in Newcastle from 44 to I think it was 17 WAT vehicles, and we are seeing a constant decline in Sydney of WAT vehicles. Added to that the fact that they're extraordinarily expensive to put on and that Government hasn't recognized that perhaps there is an alternative in what they call the Grey Ladies from Japan, where we can convert a hybrid vehicle into a WAT. There's a lot more work that government needs to consider, and it hasn't considered it. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you, Michael, appreciate those comments and your suggestion. I'll go to Tess.

**Tess Rittenhouse (SCIA Wheelchair Book & Ride):** Thank you, Andrew. Thank you, all members, of IPART, and thanks everyone for being here and supporting this. It's a great conversation I think we're all having.

On behalf of the Commission's authorized booking service, the discussion that we've had, or that IPART has raised about that drivers aren't logging into the wheelchair book and ride system, there is some easier fixes for this, I feel. It's not an integrated system with the taxis. And these are areas that we need to look at. And I know that that's not part of IPART's requirements or the requests that you've been asked for from the Minister. But these, again, I do feel that sometimes different departments, different areas of government, don't seem to communicate this together very well, and I'm learning that through the experience of managing the wheelchair book and ride service, so the understanding that everything does connect to make wheelchair work.

Unfortunately, if you have an option of opt in or opt out, a taxi driver is not going to opt in. And that's just a given, and that's just that's 20 years of experience in the industry to know that. It needs to be, the wheelchair area does need to have the centralized booking service to be either changed in regards to being an integrated system, so that a driver is logging in every time they log into their dispatch service or this needs to be. We're at a point where we're actually able to change some regulation and some legislation that if you are going to be driving a wheelchair plated vehicle, that you are going to be held accountable, and that maybe you need to have some rules and regs changed with that for drivers as well as the TSP.

I do think that the centralised booking service needs to be a, regardless of who is operating it, it still does need to be an independent service, but I do feel it needs to be a mandatory across the board. It shouldn't be an opt in or opt out, or whether you support or you don't support. I understand that we have choices, and that's the community that we're in. But in regards to wait times we have currently 385 I believe the number was of registered plates that has been advised by the Point to Point Transport Commissioner. I'm not getting anywhere near that number of plates logging into this system because it is optional.

Passengers are trying to find other ways to do this, and they're having to spend money they don't have to get picked up. So it's also about trying to change some of the rules and regulations in this to increase that service.

When we had the centralized booking service previously known as O200, everybody was logging in on that, because that was a requirement. When you take that away, this is an industry that can't, I feel, can't regulate itself. It needs the actual regulation in place.

And for WATs especially, and we must remember that this is the most vulnerable part of our community. You must remember that this is your mum and dad. This is your grandparents. These are people that are unable to get to where they need to go, and they don't get to go out one because it's expensive on them two, if they're not part of the TTSS, and because they don't know about TTSS, we do find a lot of people don't know about it when we've got bookings coming through, and we explain it to them. My team does, I should say.

But as a centralized booking service there needs to be an investment in the technology of that for an integration, and there needs to be some support behind that, for it being something that everybody needs to be a part of. If you are operating a WAT plate, or driving a WAT plate, you need to be logging into that centralized booking service. That's the whole point of having it.

And it also needs to have a certain amount of marketing behind it with what government wants to do with this, it's good to actually have a service and be seen to be doing something. I feel it's a bit of a, it wafts in the wind, because government is not prepared to go 100% backing behind it.

That's the way that I see it from a perspective of running it for the last 3 and a half years. So, and from the service that's currently in place, it's not everything that we need. And I get that. But it does need to be looked at for those rules and regs, as well as the making it. If Government's going to spend money on this, why wouldn't you back yourself on this and make it a service that is going to be there for the community in the way that it should be, and that it could be. That's all.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you. Thank you, Tess. Yes, some really great points there. Anyone any questions for Tess or comments.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** No, I just take all that on board, and they've been not just yourself, but a few others who have suggested we might make some comment, or, you know. So the Tribunal is all here, and we'll discuss whether or not we want to take up some of those broader points, or pass them on. Thanks.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Great. Thank you, Carmel, thanks, Tess, John, and, as Phil pointed out, you're probably surviving some rain up there at the moment. Good to have you still with us. I'll go to you now, John.

Are you with us?

Looks like you might be frozen. There.

John, are you there?

John Dee from Tweed Heads.

If not, we will come back to you. I might go to Nick, but we won't lose you, John.

**Nick Abraham:** Thanks, thanks, Andrew. Definitely, if John comes in at any time, feel free to just jump in.

And I've said quite a bit, but I just wanted to touch on a couple of points just to be very clear on our position, because there's been a few recommendations already made, and I want to be very clear on what our position is with some of those recommendations.

So, firstly, with IPART suggesting the 2 fare structures for metro and country, I think is definitely warranted and it's good that we're maintaining that. While we're on country, I think that what we're hearing from our members, the structure of the country fare structure is quite appropriate in a sense, and how it's structured and how it works, and the modest increase that's been proposed for the flag fall is welcomed, and so just to be very clear, because I know we've talked about flag falls and other things, particularly around urban, so from a country perspective, the flag fall is definitely a welcome change. It is a modest increase. However, the increase to the kilometre rate, we would ask that IPART revisit that. Whilst it's a good starting point, we think that it is still inadequate and would ask that that be reviewed very much in line with sort of what we saw previously, the fuel surcharge adjustment that was made in January 2023, as something that would be more palatable from that perspective.

In relation to the urban fares, and more to what David was talking about earlier about potentially a minimum fare. I think it's very, very clear, you know, whilst we appreciate looking to increase that flag fall to \$5.11, we've got to look at how we can help improving those earnings for drivers and so forth. But we've got to, I think, find another way to achieve that, not just increasing the flag fall, where you get that meter shock component so potentially looking at the reduced flag fall but having a minimum fare minimum rate. Looking at increasing the distance rate, I think this idea of having the increase to the after 12 kilometres, yeah, I know it's good intent, but I don't know whether that's gonna achieve the right outcome. We're probably gonna lose more drivers because I think that will have an impact on the earning box for drivers. So we go back to maybe one distance rate structure and look at adjusting that and increasing that accordingly whilst we try to alleviate the meter shock factor with passengers would be something that we would, I think, welcome, and will be probably the right way to go.

And the final point around the set fares, which I didn't talk about too much is, we definitely support the fact that a \$55 fare to the CBD, we've got to think about different parts of the CBD, like mentioned the northern end, you've got the central CBD, where we know majority of business is conducted in the central CBD, and the northern end of the CBD where a lot of those travellers coming out of the airport go for, so \$55 fare potentially \$60. But, however, when you deduct the potential tolls and other charges, and so forth, it is a problem. So we either go with what's been proposed by a few people here today where you talk around that \$70 mark where you want to have it all inclusive or you have it as 55, or \$60, but excluding the tolls, and those charges where... and one thing we've got a note here. I know IPART made a recommendation where the driver chooses the route; forever in a day, wherever, whether it be regulatory, whether it be other ways of doing business, it's always been the passenger who's chosen them. To say no, no, hang on, the law on one hand, outside of the airport passenger still has the right to choose the route, but when it comes to the set fare we're going to say, drop, this is going to create confusion, conflict. It's not going to work. So we either got to have one or the other. But I think to be fair, so that it isn't a driver isn't influenced by the earning, and let's be honest, we're all influenced by earning, what we take home ultimately is the means to putting food on the table, paying our mortgages and so forth. So if I can avoid the toll right, I'm going to avoid the toll right? That's a potential... if I go to the Eastern Distributor and the M8 or the Cross City tunnel, that's an extra 15 bucks off my fare box, and if I have the choice on, am I gonna incur that \$15 cost or not, any reasonable... but just let's go to the pub test for a moment. What does the pub test tell us, that you know drivers are there to make money right. They're there to look after the passengers. They're happy to, you know, not turn on the meter at certain times to assist with the shopping bags and that sort of, but at the end of the day what they take home is the means to their livelihood. So we just got to think about that when it comes to setting those fares and also skewing it as around, you know, whilst the average, you know, some fares might have been 35, \$40 to the city. Some might have been about \$60. Okay, let's meet somewhere in the middle. But when you skew it, the number of passengers, even tourists going to hotels are predominantly going to either Central CBD or further north from that perspective, and I think we need to skew the insight and the research accordingly from that perspective. So just a couple of things just to be a bit more specific around some of those positions. And I think there's a lot of alignment here around some of those features which will again make reflection in our in our submission. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Right. Thank you, Nick, and certainly really encourage feedback on all aspects of course, of our report, but particularly the proposal for the fixed fare. There's obviously design opportunities and options. So it is a draft so very open to receiving feedback. I'll throw to Mick. Think we just got you on mute, I think.

**Mick Miller:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to attend. Mick Miller, from Dubbo taxis. A bit of background. 40 years in the industry as of this year. 24 of that as an owner operator. The proposed rates of a dollar, well anything is welcome, the proposed rate of a dollar on a flag for me on an average day that represents about 20 bucks. So from a driver's point of view that represents, yeah, he's gonna earn an extra \$10. I have a 12 h shift. Carry on to that the kilometre rate of 5 cents a kilometre to earn that extra 20 bucks, my car would have to have a paid kilometre return of 400 kilometres in a trip in a shift. I do roughly 250 in a 12 h shift. My driver. If he does that he's only going to earn an extra 75 cents.

So I just wanted to put that in perspective of your proposed crossing and just on the back of, you know, what Phil Doyle's comments earlier on it. It's not a particularly well-paid job. We do it for a lot of good reasons and we don't expect to be millionaires out of it. But we'd like to enjoy a relatively good standard of living.

And I have only one other possible suggestion that, you know the taxi industry goes, and I don't know how you would implement it, but I don't know. How do buses work? Buses are presumably subsidized pretty heavily by the government and just return a certain percentage, per, what is it? Couple of dollars per ride? Surely, in this day and age of technology, if somebody got in a cab and they paid a minimum of, say, \$5 per ride, the algorithm would know when I picked the person up where I dropped them off and the Government then pay us a fee for doing the job. And they, the government, get a flat \$5, or whatever fee they feel is indicative as their return box. And basically, we start working for the government, because in the past, you know, we've provided a public transport for the public that the Government, for whatever reason, can't do or won't do.

Thank you, that's all I had to say.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thank you, Mick, appreciate those comments, and we very much welcome innovative ideas. And certainly there's some food for thought there, unless anyone from the Tribunal wanted to add something. I will jump to Phil.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, western Sydney):** Okay.

I think Mick has drilled down to something here. Is that all this, you know? Let's have a technical workshop on whether it's \$2.84, or whether we're gonna have a \$9 flag fall, it's just beating around the bush. You know, this industry, as I said before, is a block toilet. This industry is dying. There won't be a taxi industry as we look at it now in 5 years time won't be because you won't get drivers. You can't live on taxi driver income, I mean, how hard is that as a concept to try and get your head around.

We need a substantial lift in taxi fares substantial by 30% minimum. And the people will pay it because taxi driving is not a recreational activity. Taxi driving is something that people do because they have to do it. If they had an alternative they'd be doing that. We are the movement of people of last resort. And what Mick said, is spot on, you know, the only way you're going to save this industry, if we start seriously looking at a model of putting taxi drivers on wages, it's the only way you're going to get drivers. You will get drivers, but they'll be hopeless and you'll get people ripped off and you'll get people abandoned. You'll get people like the 13 WAT driver who left the bloke at the bottom of the set of stairs at the Windsor Entertainment Centre the other week. When I turned up later with another passenger, had to help him around the side of the ramp. You know, this is what we're dealing with in this industry, is this, industry is cactus unless we significantly improve the income for taxi drivers. Mick was driving at it before he does an incredible job up there, I mean, I can't imagine what it's like driving a taxi around Gordon in the middle of the night. But I drive in Mount Druitt. I mean, I deal with similar stuff. It's hard work. And to do it, you know, to say to us, you're going to give us an extra 80 cents an hour is just an insult. It's just an insult, you're saying to us "bailee taxi drivers, you're garbage. You'll put up with that. We'll see you next Monday, because you want to get a taxi to the airport." You need this... the Tribunal is missing the point. We need a substantial increase.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Right. Thanks, Phil. I think we've got that point. I'll just throw to our deputy chair Jonathan Coppel.

**Jonathan Coppel (IPART):** Thank you, Andrew.

And thank you to the participants today for all the input on the on the draft report, I've heard a lot of points relating to not just the fair structure, but also the trial at Sydney Airport, the use of wheelchair accessible taxis.

I wanted to try and get a better sense on how proposed fare changes not necessarily just those in the draft report, but also some of the structural changes that have been put forward like a nighttime rate, daytime rate, peak rate off peak rate. Are there any views on how those sorts of structures bear on the use of taxis by customers?

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thanks, Jonathan. I'll go to Muhammad and then Bill. Muhammad.

**Muhmmad:** Guys. Thanks for inviting for this survey.

Look, have you guys considered about the drivers been waiting at Airport for 3-3 h and spending a lot of time around sometime. Most of the drivers even spend more than 3 and a half hours over at the airport, and then eventually, you have to, sometime he has to cover his cost by overcharging the customer. Which is ridiculous, he shouldn't do that.

And, secondly, sometime, most of the drivers, they have to pay a lot of green slip amount which they think it could be cheaper than normal, like, you know if the Government or other transport bodies would think about it.

And thirdly, the you know, the half of the holding bay at International Airport has been taken by Uber. Isn't the Uber compliance with rank and hail policies? Because eventually the rank is technically, like, you know, taken by Uber half of the rank at report.

So yeah, that's 3 points.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Yeah, that's great. Fantastic. Thank you, Muhammad. Certainly, we've grabbed those points. Appreciate it. I'll go to Phil and then to David.

**Phil Doyle (Bailee taxi driver, western Sydney):** Yeah. Addressing Jonathan's statement, I said it before, Jonathan. I said it at the last hearing. It's something people don't seem to be grasping. All the price sensitive nature of taxi transport has gone. It went 10 years ago over the last 10 years. It's gone to ride share. If you're worried about how much a taxi costs, then you're not catching a taxi right? All their customer base at the moment aren't interested in cost. They just want a taxi. They want to get from A to B. That's their primary demand. No one, as I said before, no one's catching taxis as a recreational activity. You could double the fares, and you wouldn't impact demand that much because people need to get to medical appointments. People need to get away from a domestic violence situation. I had a woman offer me \$300 in North Richmond because she's trying to get to Wallacia. I'm dealing with a dad or old man on the lawn, coming down the path with a baseball bat, and I'm trying to load her and the kids into the back of the cab. Saturday morning, 9 o'clock to get her to Mum's place at Wallacia. Now she just she just gave me 200 bucks because she needed to get out of there, and that's what, that's what the taxi industry is in Western Sydney. Is that the price? It's not price sensitive. It's you could charge what you want. Why do you think the drivers in Penrith get away with slugging people with 20 bucks and saying, oh, there's a minimum fare, 20 bucks, which is what they tell passengers, which is illegal, but they do it anyway, and they get away with it because somebody wants to get, you know, I want to get down to Jemison Road on, you know, on a wet Friday night. You're not going to argue with him. You're going to pay the 20 bucks and get to where you want to go.

This is what's happening now in the industry. So all this fiddling around with classical economics about what's it going to be? What's our supply point? What's our price point? And everything like that is just so much flim-flam. It's ignoring the reality. It's ignoring the elephant in the room, which is, the drivers need to be remunerated more so they do the right thing. That's what's going on, and anything else is just you're mucking around. You're wasting your time and hours.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Alright. Thank you, Phil, I will... unless Sharon, did you want to respond to that point, or otherwise. I'll go to David.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** No, I wanna ask Nick Miller a question, if that's okay. So go to David first.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** I'll go to David, then I'll come back to you, Sharon. David.



**David Samuel:** Thanks, Andrew. Yeah, Jonathan, I think Phil's largely right. I think if we try to continually match what rideshare do we just start a race to the bottom, and we know who has the bigger pockets. We know where that ends up, and we know what that does to drivers. It's something, I think that, as I said at the beginning, the actual nature of how you structure the fare, isn't that important anymore. It's really about making sure that the operator and the driver can cover their costs, and it's at a price point that people are willing to accept. And I think that price point I wouldn't go as far as to say it doesn't matter at all. You can put it wherever you want, but I do think we need to be focused on what it costs to provide this service and what a reasonable return to a taxi driver is in that. And it's always been a complex situation, Jonathan, because you've got 2 diametrically opposed interests. You've got a driver who wants to earn as much as they can, and a passenger wants to pay as little as they can, and that's why regulation in this space is required, because it's a market failure. The 2 don't coincide easily, but I don't think we should get too hung up with technical aspects of how we structure fares, what happens, at what time of day; we just need to make sure that there is a living to be earned by taxi drivers, because the community will receive a better service. And I think Fred touched on that classic thing that Fred and I have discussed for years, and that's the elasticity of demand. And it's a very hard thing to track and measure. And you don't really find out often until you've set it. But I do personally believe, even at the moment, and you know it's been hard over the last 12 months for everyone, because of cost of living and decreasing demand, and things like that. I still don't think price is the number one determinant of whether or not someone gets a taxi. I think it's availability of that service and the quality of the service that drives that demand. I don't think it's fundamentally price. At least, I don't think price is more important than those other factors. If I can't get a taxi well, I'm not going to use it. It's pretty simple. I'll go to a competitive space. But I think we need to be very careful not to get spooked by what large international companies are able to achieve through subsidised business models. And, Jonathan, I think that we turn our mind more to the aggregate outcome of ensuring that it's an accurate fare rather than trying to split it up and get too clever. Ultimately the passenger will make a decision, so will the driver. And at this rate what Phil and other drivers are saying is, well, we're just not prepared to provide the service anymore, and that there is no better example than in what is happening in wheelchair. Accessible taxis in New South Wales right now. The drivers are saying the demand hasn't gone anywhere, but the drivers are saying, we're not willing to do this at this rate anymore. We just can't afford to, so I'll leave it at that, Andrew. Thanks again.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** All right. Thank you, David, and thank you for all of those points. Sharon got a question for Mick.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** Thanks, Andrew. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Sharon Henrik. I'm 1 of the Tribunal members, and I live in Batlow Nick, and I grew up in Tumut, so I'm 1 of the Tribunal members who lives in regional Australia, and we've spoken a lot today about urban, and we've touched on country. But I think Urban has dominated the conversation.

If I've understood you correctly, you've pointed out the very marginal impact on your income or your driver's income from what's being proposed, and you've pointed out that taxi drivers are not well paid, and you've also drawn an analogy with how buses are heavily subsidised by government. You've asked whether I think at least country taxi drivers should work for the government because you're providing public transport that no one else will, and I'll just pause there to make sure I've understood your key points correctly.



**Mick Miller:** Yep, that's correct.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** That's great. So can we just drill down a little bit deeper into that? So transferring country taxis to government might be a big 40-point turn I think, I'm not sure how achievable it would be, and it's probably not within IPART's remit so I wanted to drill down a little bit more with you, and I think it might be useful if just briefly like, you've noted that you do about 250 kilometres in a 12 h shift. It might be just useful for everyone if you can just briefly explain; how many trips a day are you picking up people from properties, taking them to hospital, or the opposite might be? You pick them up from the hospital and take them home? Or do you do much rank and hail work? How much, how much your work is booked.

**Mick Miller:** I couldn't actually give you a percentage of rank and hail. But during daytime work, yeah, it is a fair portion of our work. And the average fare for me in Dubbo is between 15 to \$20. If I'm lucky enough to get a job to the airport from the CBD, it's a \$25 job. Yes, that can be a little bit better if it's from, say, the east side of town to the to the airport. It might run as high as 30 or \$35, and as a driver in Dubbo we start to get a bit excited at a at a price like that. Yeah, I just wanted to sort of show the relevance of the amount that you're offering as far as a proposed rate. Like, I say, a dollar. Yeah, I can do on average 20 to 25 jobs a day. If I'm doing a night shift, which I still do, Friday, Saturday nights I could do as many as 30, 35 jobs on a busy night. So in dollar terms, that represents an extra \$35 in my take, but just to drill down on the kilometre rate and just backing what Nick has proposed. Something a little bit more substantial is 5 cents, as I've just pointed out, to earn \$20 I've got to have a paid, and I mean a paid return, and there's a difference between paid and unpaid kilometres. As I said, I do it roughly 250 a day but only half that might be paid kilometres. Do you understand that concept?

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** I believe so, but you can...

**Mick Miller:** I go from a point A to Point B empty, and I pick the person up, and I bring them back to point A, so I'm only getting paid one way. The bonus is if I got a job to the airport and I sit there and there happens to be a plane coming in. And I get paid coming back. I basically get paid both ways. You understand that.

So there's a difference between paid kilometres as in when my meter is on as opposed to when my meter is off. So hence what I'm saying I do, 250 roughly on a day shift. I might do 350 on a night shift, but they're not all paid kilometres, so to earn \$20 at your proposed 5 cents a kilometre increase, I have to do 400 kilometres to earn \$20, but if that was pay, or you know, if that was all paid kilometres, I'd have a great night. But I might only be paid for 200 or 250 kilometres of that. So you understand how hard I've got to work to earn 20 bucks.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** I believe I understand what you're saying. And I believe you're working very hard to earn that \$20. I'm just conscious of the time. But I do just have one more question, and it goes to wheelchair accessible taxis in regional Australia. And I appreciate Dubbo is, you know, an important regional city.

**Mick Miller:** It is.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** But are there any, or are there...I'll just start, are there any WATs in Dubbo? Wheelchair accessible taxis.

**Mick Miller:** I think our figure is 5.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** And what's the population of Dubbo? Approximately.

**Mick Miller:** 50,000.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** 50,000.

**Mick Miller:** We have a have a real issue with our WAT vehicles. And I don't mean to transgress. But there's a similar sentiment to what's going around to get drivers to drive a WAT vehicle.

And it's not just the WATs. I think that would be the best part of driving a WAT vehicle would be helping, you know, the people with mobility issues. When you're not driving that you're doing what we call Maxi taxi work, and for that I believe any driver doing that needs a medal. It's not pleasant work, it really isn't. So yes, we nearly, all our operators here are just basically owner operators for a simple term, and subsequently don't have relief drivers. So they come out and do their in a lot of cases at least 12 hours a day, but come 5.30 in the afternoon our drivers are spent and they've gone home. And we're really looking down the barrel of making a hard decision.

All our competitors don't supply a wheelchair accessible car after 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Why should the taxi industry or Dubbo radio cabs in particular, be left with the expectation of providing wheelchair transport for those who can't transport themselves. You know that needs to be some real, considerably financial incentives for us to provide those services. You know, in the ideal world it'd be like good to stagger, say, okay, we have 3 cars work in the daytime and 2 cars work at night. But yeah, they're all their own operators. You can only plead with them. But you can't make people go to work.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** I understand. No, thanks very much for that, Nick. I think that's very helpful. Thank you.

**Mick Miller:** Happy to talk offline if you'd like to contact me, Sharon.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** Okay. Thank you.

**Mick Miller:** Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Alright. Thank you for that. Now Geoff's got his hand up, and we are just slightly out of time. So if people have to leave we do understand that if you've got other appointments. Geoff.

You're just on mute mate.

**Geoff Ferris (Taxis NSW):** Yes, thanks. I just want, Sharon as I said before, I'm the president of the Country Taxi Operating Association. I've run businesses, in Dubbo, and with Mick, and I've run a lot of businesses in rural New South Wales. There is a big difference between a country operation and a metropolitan operation. You say, how often do we use rank and hail work? It's not as high as a lot of metropolitan operators, but we do go back to the rank. So in a town like Dubbo, Griffith, we go back to the rank. That's where the taxi sits.

People then in the middle of Dubbo head towards the taxi rank if they want one now they see one coming down the street, or if they're at the other end of the main street. They might call when we do a radio job. But really the taxi ranks are placed to park them so people know there's a focus to go there. So there is some rank and hail work. But sometimes people are 3 blocks away because they know the taxi doesn't cruise past. The taxi in country doesn't cruise around town. They head back to the rank, so they're in one place, and in a town like Dubbo Mick, what have we got, 5 or 6 ranks around the place like there's some in Eastern, some in West, you know, so there's not just one rank in a big town, in some of the smaller towns there's only one rank in the main street, so they're not cruising around. You don't get many hails in a country town. They're heading. You can get a hail, but you don't get a lot of people waiting out the front, because it might be an hour or 2 before a cab comes down that street.

So it's a little bit different that way. What Mick was saying, I think, if I can paraphrase what Mick was suggesting about a subsidy, wasn't that the Government takes over running taxis in New South Wales, was that if you want to increase, particularly in country and in areas where there is no public transport, and my other role is, I do run public transport in a lot of towns, and that's buses. Mick's suggesting that maybe a per head top up, or a subsidy rather than running the service. But it makes it then viable for someone with a taxi to be able to do those jobs that technically don't pay if you are looking at profit and loss of running your vehicle. And because I think, without taking the words out of your mouth, that's what you were suggesting is a per head top up. If you like to say, you know, why are we going to go and carry this person from Dubbo, 20 km out of Dubbo, where there is no chance, no one will get a return fare. If I get a fare from Sydney Airport to Parramatta there's a good chance I'll get a fare somewhere in Parramatta or around there to somewhere else. That doesn't happen in regional New South Wales, you get a 1-way fare and come back empty, and that's why the 12 kilometre rate's a bit higher to cover those longer ones, to give you something to pay for your fuel and everything else to come back.

So that's just the difference in metropolitan to rural and regional operation. If I can say that, Sharon. And just if that helps you to understand a little bit of the difference between the 2 areas of operation. Yeah.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** No, thank you, Jeff. I do believe I understand. For example, just to...

**Geoff Ferris (Taxis NSW):** Yeah, sorry. Not saying you didn't. Yeah, yeah.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** I had to catch a cab from Batlow to Tumut.

**Geoff Ferris (Taxis NSW):** Exactly right.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** So the driver has to drive up the range. He's got no chance, probably, of bringing someone up.

**Geoff Ferris (Taxis NSW):** Someone back.

**Sharon Henrick (IPART):** So I totally understand what you're saying. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** All right. Well, thank you everyone. We have unfortunately run out of time today. I'm sure there are lots of issues, and we could have a lot longer conversation, and I will put in a plug again for our workshop. So certainly, if you think of some other things between now and the workshop, and you want to come to the workshop there's an opportunity to also use that to let us know. But also, if you do think of anything else please add it to your submissions, and we've also taken note of any of the comments that we've got in the comment box there that we didn't get to today. I know, Muhammad, Tess, you've added some comments, really appreciate those comments as well. Please keep them coming. We really do appreciate the feedback that we get from everybody today. But I will need to wrap things up just to keep us all a little bit on time. We're slightly over, and I'll hand back now to close the hearing to Carmel Donnelly.

## 1.5 Closing remarks

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Thank you, Andrew, and I will just acknowledge Muhammad. You've got your hand up. I'm not sure if it's up from before, but if I know people will have to leave, so I might just...

**Muhmmad:** Was before, I believe. Sorry. Just give me a sec.

**Carmel Donnelly (IPART):** Okay, thanks. That's all right. Good.

Okay, well, in that case I will just say a few words and close the public hearing.

Thank you very much everyone, for very straightforward feedback. You've given us a lot to think about, and we certainly will give every consideration to everything that everyone said today.

If you want to have a look at what has been said today and review it later, we will put our slides up on our website and also a transcript of the discussion today, and there will be, as you know, other opportunities to have your say about the submission process and the workshop that we talked about. And so you can also easily lodge your opinions via a short survey on our website. So you're most welcome to do that. We'll consider everything that's said and as the slide shows, put our final report which will be submitted in May.

If you would like to talk to someone at IPART, I think the next slide will come up here which has got the contact details for the IPART team. There. You're most welcome to get in touch.

I do know that there was some people who gave us some very important information. We might also follow up with you, if you don't mind, just to check. We've got the details right as we work forward through the review. So it has been very helpful to us.

I want to thank you very much for making yourself available and for contributing your feedback. We'll take it all into account and have a good rest of the day. Thank you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Thanks everyone.

**Muhmmad:** See you.

**Andrew Nicholls (IPART):** Bye, bye.

**Muhmmad:** Thank you. Bye.

**Nick Abraham:** Bye, everyone, thank you.