

INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL

REVIEW OF TAXI FARES AND NEW ANNUAL TAXI LICENCES
FROM 1 JULY 2018

Tribunal Members

Ms Deborah Cope and Mr Ed Willett, Members

Members of the Secretariat

Mr Hugo Harmstorf, Ms Fiona Towers, Ms Jennifer Vincent,
Ms Heather Dear

At

Shearwater Room, Opal Cove Resort,
Opal Boulevard, Korora Bay, Coffs Harbour NSW

On Thursday, 1 February 2018, at 11.00am

1 **OPENING REMARKS**

2
3 MS COPE: Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much
4 for coming. We realise that people are taking time out of
5 their busy businesses in order to come and speak to us and
6 we really appreciate that you have taken the time to do
7 that, so thank you very much.

8
9 My name is Deborah Cope, I am a member of the
10 Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. I would like
11 to begin today by acknowledging that we are meeting on the
12 traditional lands of the Gumbaynggirr people, and I would
13 like to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of
14 the land and to their elders past and present.

15
16 I welcome you all to the public forum, which is part
17 of our consultation process for our review of maximum rank
18 and hail fares for taxis and a number of new licences
19 outside of Sydney,

20
21 I am joined today by my fellow tribunal member,
22 Ed Willett, and I am also assisted by IPART staff from the
23 secretariat.

24
25 At today's hearing, we want to hear from you. We want
26 to hear your views on our draft report and on the number of
27 annual taxi licences to be released outside of Sydney, as
28 well as maximum rank and hail fares, statewide. We will be
29 making recommendations on both of these areas to Transport
30 for NSW.

31
32 As well as the discussion today, we are also seeking
33 written submissions. The closing date for those
34 submissions is 9 February rather than 3 February, which is
35 on the paper that has just been distributed.

36
37 Our final report is due to be submitted to the
38 Minister for Transport and Infrastructure on 9 March 2018.
39 The minister will determine when our final report is
40 released publicly, and Transport for NSW will make
41 decisions about whether or not to follow the
42 recommendations that we make on fares and licences.

43
44 I will start today's proceedings with a brief overview
45 of our approach to the review, our draft findings on
46 competition, and some of what we heard from participants in
47 our public forum in Sydney on Tuesday. We had a very good

1 turn-up to that forum and it included some people from
2 country areas as well as some from the city. We would like
3 to hear whether your experiences are similar to what we
4 heard at the Sydney forum.

5
6 In our approach to this review, we started by looking
7 at competition in the point to point transport market.
8 Technology and regulatory change have made the point to
9 point transport market much more competitive now and more
10 open to competition in the future. This is a good thing.
11 Ultimately, competitive markets are where there will be
12 less need for regulation, including regulation of fares,
13 because the forces of competition will ensure that
14 participants charge the right price for their services.

15
16 One of the aspects of competition that we looked at
17 was the size of the market for the point to point transport
18 and how that has been changing and how big taxis' share of
19 that market is. We looked at bank electronic transaction
20 data to identify changes in demand in taxis and rideshare
21 from July 2015 through to September 2017. The data
22 indicated that there has been a rapid take-up of rideshare
23 services, but that has not generally reduced the number of
24 taxi trips that have been taken.

25
26 As the graph beside me shows, in Coffs Harbour
27 specifically, the bank data indicates that the number of
28 transactions grew with the introduction of rideshare. This
29 pattern is also found in Newcastle and Wollongong.
30 However, the people at the Sydney hearing said that this is
31 not consistent with their experience in the work on the
32 ground and that taxi work has fallen.

33
34 We then asked those businesses if they could provide
35 us with further data to show what additional evidence there
36 is of how things have changed more recently, and we will be
37 taking that into account when we look at our further
38 analysis.

39
40 We also considered how easy it is to get into the taxi
41 business. We found that, in many parts of New South Wales,
42 the cost of the taxi licence makes it hard for new
43 participants and it can prevent existing businesses from
44 expanding their services if they want to put on extra
45 vehicles.

46
47 Again, at the Sydney hearing, we heard that people

1 were strongly opposed to new licences being issued, and we
2 will look again at these recommendations between the draft
3 and the final report in light of the input that we receive
4 from the public hearings.

5
6 Our draft finding was that competition was not yet
7 sufficiently developed to remove maximum fare regulation
8 for rank and hail services in all areas. We also found
9 that a small increase in the number of taxi licences would
10 make it easier to get into the market, allowing the taxi
11 industry to compete more effectively with hire vehicles and
12 improving services to passengers.

13
14 Again, at the public forum in Sydney, we heard that
15 the industry's view is that competition had developed very
16 rapidly and that competition has meant a drop in the demand
17 for taxi services. Participants said that the number of
18 trips per hour has dropped off and that drivers are working
19 longer hours to get the same takings as they were
20 previously and that many drivers are preferring to work for
21 other forms of hire vehicles and rideshare companies rather
22 than taxis.

23
24 Participants from the country areas also said that
25 they had increased competition from courtesy transport and
26 from community transport. They also thought that there was
27 little distinction between rank and hail work and booked
28 work, so that hire vehicles are effectively competing for
29 all the same services as taxis, particularly in country
30 areas, where there is not a lot of rank and hail work.

31
32 We would be very interested to see whether this gels
33 with your experiences and, in particular, we would like to
34 get any data that is available about the proportion of rank
35 and hail work that occurs outside of Sydney.

36
37 I will open the discussion up now, and we would like
38 to test both our draft findings on competition and the
39 views expressed by participants at the Sydney hearings
40 against your experiences.

41
42 Later, we will have a short presentation around our
43 draft recommendations on fares and licences and invite
44 further discussion.

45
46 As this hearing is being recorded and transcribed,
47 I ask that, when you speak, you identify yourselves and,

1 where relevant, your organisation, and speak clearly and
2 loudly.

3
4 I will start by asking Martin and Jessica whether they
5 have any introductory comments and then move to the floor
6 for anybody who would like to make a comment.

7
8 MS LINSELL: I will start. My name is Jessica Linsell, and
9 I am here representing Transport for NSW.

10
11 As you are probably all aware, the new Point to Point
12 Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act commenced on
13 1 November, and that introduced a requirement for us to
14 make a determination on the number of taxi licences to be
15 released across New South Wales. This extends the
16 requirement that has been applied in Sydney since 2010 to
17 the rest of New South Wales. As a consequence, we have
18 asked IPART to review and make recommendations on the
19 number of licences to be released outside of Sydney.

20
21 Inside Sydney, for the greater metropolitan area,
22 consistent with the government's response to the Point to
23 Point Taskforce report, we are keeping the number of taxis
24 constant, and the government has decided that only
25 replacement licences will be issued.

26
27 We have also asked IPART to review the maximum taxi
28 fares that are to apply across New South Wales. I am here
29 today to hear your input and I look forward to getting
30 IPART's recommendations.

31
32 MS COPE: Martin?

33
34 MR ROGERS: Thank you for allowing me to come and
35 represent the New South Wales Taxi Council. For those who
36 don't know me, my name is Martin Rogers, I am the new CEO
37 of the NSW Taxi Council.

38
39 I must say I am glad to see a great representation of
40 our industry here today because, realistically, in my
41 opinion, and in the opinion of the NSW Taxi Council, this
42 IPART report could spell the death knell for regional taxi
43 services in New South Wales if 137 new licences get issued.

44
45 We are already struggling, in terms of our businesses,
46 to make ends meet. It is important that we make it known
47 to the government that an additional 137 licences, which

1 can operate anywhere in New South Wales, would be
2 attractive to big business and/or foreign ownership to come
3 in and cherry-pick our areas. They could come for the
4 Coffs Cup, the World Rally - come in November, take the
5 fares and then disappear. Who will be here to offer those
6 services to the most vulnerable in the community?
7

8 It is your opportunity today to let IPART know of your
9 challenges with the recommendations, and with the report
10 itself, which I will comment on as I go. I believe that
11 some of the facts need to be questioned in terms of the
12 report itself, especially when it talks about the fares and
13 the distribution and the fact that the taxis have not
14 suffered, when we experience, on a daily basis, up to a
15 30 per cent decline.
16

17 I caught a taxi from the airport today. The driver
18 worked through January six days a week, with shifts up to
19 12 hours a day, taking home, if he was lucky, just over
20 \$100. We have to make sure that we protect country
21 regional taxi operations and make sure they are viable and
22 that they are here to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a
23 week when we need them.
24

25 This is your opportunity. I will add comments where
26 I can, but I urge each and every one of you to add your
27 commentary. This is the time to do it. We need to let
28 IPART and also Transport for NSW and Minister Constance
29 know - don't kill our industry. The regulations have come
30 in. Let them lie. Let the dust settle. Let's see where
31 we end up and then maybe we might make some changes in
32 terms of licences. Thank you.
33

34 **Discussion on competition in the point to point transport** 35 **market**

36
37 MS COPE: Would anybody from the audience like to make a
38 comment?
39

40 MR WEST: I am Peter West from Macksville. I have a few
41 concerns.
42

43 I assume IPART is truly independent, as it says here,
44 because a lot of what I have read so far in the report is,
45 to me, very biased and it leans towards the regulator - if
46 there is one - and/or government.
47

1 Taxi prices, obviously, in Moree, Coffs Harbour,
2 Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads are similar to house prices.
3 People pay a premium to live in certain areas. That does
4 not necessarily reflect the income of those particular
5 vehicles. A lot of the reporting, in my belief, is totally
6 wrong. The opposition is not only rideshare. Rideshare
7 has been in Coffs Harbour for five minutes. To compare
8 that with the growth in Coffs Harbour is still unfair.
9

10 Community transport has been the big improver in this
11 area. I think it has multiplied by four or five times in
12 my 20 or 30 years in this area. Courtesy buses, you name
13 it, anybody with wheels seems to be opposition to our
14 businesses here.
15

16 I have a whole list, but I will give someone else a
17 bit of a go. That is my concern to start with.
18

19 MR SAUNDERS: Hello, I am Jeff Saunders from Kempsey
20 Taxis.
21

22 We have been operating up there for 30 years, or
23 something, but I have been there for five, and in that
24 time - well, I will start off with a couple of other points
25 first.
26

27 In the study that you did, you mentioned that you
28 checked bank statements, I believe, which is hardly
29 representative of taxi trips. How many people use their
30 credit cards to pay for a taxi?
31

32 MS COPE: The data was adjusted. We then used survey data
33 to determine what the proportion of those were and adjusted
34 the data to reflect that. So, yes, we do recognise that.
35

36 MR SAUNDERS: There are more people using credit cards now
37 than there were, but it is still a tiny fraction of the
38 actual taxi trips.
39

40 As for how hard it is to get a taxi or to expand a
41 business, no people in country New South Wales are looking
42 at spending money on buying any taxis at present. I don't
43 know about other towns, but we have had several plates on
44 hold for a long time. In the past, we bought taxi plates
45 around the network. Before I came here even, taxi plates
46 were bought from people and then they were handed back,
47 just because there were too many taxis in the town.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

Yes, the bigger towns with the higher growth centres are maybe growing 15 to 20 per cent population-wise. Those towns have been increasing the number of taxis. However, these days, I don't think they even need taxis now; they can put on hire cars and that type of car. So you don't need taxis in those towns.

With regard to the new licences, if I had a fair bit of money - maybe about \$10 million - I could probably buy the lot and wipe out the taxi industry in every town in New South Wales. Somebody like Uber X or Cabcharge could do that. They already have everything set-up, so it would be quite an easy task to monopolise the state within five years. These are the sorts of things that could happen, and it would not be hard at all.

With 137 taxis, they could wipe out three or four towns at once - the bigger towns - and then move on to the smaller towns. Within five years, there would not be a taxi in the state except for the ones in the big cities, and Uber will have them.

It is a strange process that you have gone through. I do query, like my mate back there, the statistics you have created from the bank transactions. Even without that, I don't think any of that stuff is very sensible. Thank you.

MR BERNE: Charlie Berne, Coffs Harbour Taxis. I am concerned about the information that you are getting, and I will ask one question: Have you spoken to all these networks about what their income is?

MS COPE: We asked the networks to provide the data, and they didn't.

MR SAUNDERS: You didn't ask us.

MR BERNE: How much time frame did you allow? Well, let me tell you about Coffs Harbour Taxis. That graph looks like it's back to front, except for the grey area. From December 2015 - if you read the graph from this side - to August 2017 would be July 2015, and the July 2015 would be August 2017. That is the income and the taxi usage. That is what the graph should look like.

1 I don't know where you are getting your information
2 there from, but it is not very accurate. That's what
3 I would like to bring to your attention.
4

5 MS COPE: What we have used there is actual transaction
6 data. If people have better data, and more up-to-date
7 data, then please provide it to us because we want to get
8 the most accurate and up-to-date information. We have
9 asked for it in the past. We were not able to get it. We
10 used what we thought was the next best thing. If we can
11 get better data, we are saying please provide it.
12

13 MR BERNE: So what you are trying to tell us is that all
14 your judgments are only on your thoughts, not what is
15 actually happening? I am telling you what is actually
16 happening in Coff's Harbour, and it would be the same every
17 else once that rideshare business comes in.
18

19 Rideshare is helpful in the busy times, but it is not
20 helpful in the quiet times. People are not going to work
21 after midnight, at night, to get a pittance and supply a
22 service.
23

24 Now, you are all about service. We are all about
25 service, but you are wiping out service, fully, carte
26 blanche, 100 per cent, if you pursue things the way you are
27 going.
28

29 That's all I would like to say. Thank you.
30

31 MS COPE: Yes, down the front?
32

33 MR CASEY: I am Graham Casey from Lismore Taxis.
34

35 We have a similar position to everyone else here. We
36 have 24 plates on the road. We have four plates sitting on
37 the shelf. We bought out six plates about 12 years ago,
38 because the taxi industry has gone down. We still have
39 four on the shelf. We put two back on the road, four maxis,
40 which cost us, in order to have them on the road just to
41 look after the wheelchair and keep up the 10 per cent, and
42 that type of thing.
43

44 We also roster off, from Sunday to Friday nights, a
45 couple of cars, for example, 50 per cent Thursday nights.
46 Only 33 per cent go out on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
47 night because you have to roster them. By doing that,

1 there is enough to keep the public happy, and it also gives
2 our drivers maybe 100 bucks a shift. If you wanted to put
3 out more cars at night, you would not get drivers. We have
4 the situation where owners are having to do double shifts.
5 Then the car goes in the shed at night after 8 o'clock. We
6 are forcing them to go out.

7
8 We have a law that says: your car is rostered on.
9 You have to stay on, otherwise you're fined. If you don't
10 make any money, bad luck, you will lose more in fines. You
11 will get that one night where you have to wait, and then
12 that is wrecking our business.

13
14 We are the same as everyone else. We don't know where
15 this 10 per cent comes from that you want to stick into
16 towns like Lismore. Do you actually do your homework and
17 say, "That town needs taxis. That town doesn't need
18 taxis"? Do you actually know which town has plates on the
19 shelf, just sitting there?

20
21 We would be happy to bring our four plates off the
22 shelf and make them work, but the demand is just not there,
23 and we don't have the drivers nor do we have the money, so
24 you could put Lismore on that mark.

25
26 MR ROGERS: Graham, could I comment on that because, on
27 page 49 of the report, it says that the registration plates
28 may be put on hold due to insufficient demand to make it
29 worthwhile to operate a taxi, or to keep licence prices
30 higher than they otherwise would be. Part of the IPART
31 report is saying that you keep licences on hold to inflate
32 and keep the prices of your plates higher. I would like to
33 know how correct that is.

34
35 MR CASEY: We would love to be out there making money with
36 them. Since we paid for them, they have only decreased in
37 value. Just for me, personally, I am 64 years old.
38 I bought two plates. I have been in the business for
39 28 years, and I bought two plates. I paid \$310,000 for the
40 last plate, and that is my superannuation. I have been
41 working since I was 14 years old, but where is my
42 superannuation now? We can't sell our plates. We have a
43 dozen plates in Lismore that want to be sold. Who is going
44 to buy a taxi in these times when everyone is telling us
45 taxis are down the chute? This is the problem.

46
47 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: Neil McKenzie, from Woolgoolga Taxis.

1 We are only a small operation. We have three taxis on the
2 road.

3
4 Along the same lines as Lismore, we are running one
5 vehicle of a night. Our night trade has declined, over the
6 13 years that we have operated our business. From
7 operating our full fleet on a Friday and Saturday night, we
8 are down to one vehicle on a Friday and Saturday night. On
9 some of these nights, that driver can still struggle to
10 make a dollar.

11
12 I would like to know, in your calculations relating to
13 releasing over 100 licences in the country areas, where
14 that would improve service. Are there complaints coming to
15 IPART about the service from country taxis? Are there
16 unsatisfied requirements? At the moment we are so far in
17 surplus that some days I will roster one vehicle on. Then
18 my wife might come out and do a bit of bookwork and sit
19 there, just in case we get another job.

20
21 The requirements for adding more plates do not seem to
22 gel when you talk to these people about service levels.
23 Why have you come to the conclusion that you would need
24 extra and surplus plates in the country areas? That's my
25 first question.

26
27 Can I talk about pricing now?

28
29 MS COPE: We will get on to the detail of that later, but
30 if you would like to make a few comments, please do.

31
32 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I'll just make a brief comment.
33 Pricing has not altered in the last four years. The
34 previous increase back in 2012 was 2.5 per cent, or
35 something. Effectively, we have had a 2.5 per cent increase in taxi
36 fares in six years. No business can survive like that. No
37 operation can be dictated to, to the point where people are
38 not making any more money. Our drivers have not had a pay
39 increase for four years. How can we survive like that?

40
41 Another thing is that a lot of our contract work,
42 particularly TTSS and Veterans Affairs, is linked to our
43 taxi meters. I understand we have the ability to fluctuate
44 the pricing now under the agreement, but for any fare that
45 is locked into a taxi meter setting, we have not been able
46 to increase that for four years.

1 When you want to deregulate, that's great, but don't
2 regulate us as well - it should be one or the other.
3 Either we are free to do what we want or you are going to
4 tell us what to do. If telling us what to do, gives you
5 control over the taxi industry so that we get quality out
6 there for the customer, that would be great. That is why
7 we pay half a million dollars for a taxi licence, so that
8 we can go out and provide that service, being told what to
9 do, regulated, for the protection of customer and the
10 protection of the driver.

11
12 However, if you remove all of that what you are doing
13 is saying, "You can go and do what you want now. Wear your
14 thongs to work. Don't wash your car. Drive a car that is
15 falling to bits." Have you ever been to Fiji and got in a
16 taxi? They are a deathtrap. That is what can happen now,
17 and we can do that. I don't understand where the industry
18 is going. If you want quality of service, removing these
19 regulations is actually detrimental to that.

20
21 We have had our business on the market for five years.
22 We cannot sell it. We have it listed for about 75 per cent
23 of what we paid for it 13 years ago and we have not got an
24 inquiry - nothing. We do not have an exit strategy. We
25 cannot get out. What are you going to do to us by
26 releasing another 100 licences? I just don't get it. It
27 is just really, really hurtful.

28
29 MR PORTEOUS: Good morning, Peter Porteous, from Grafton
30 Taxis.

31
32 When I bought my taxi 22 years ago, it cost me
33 \$200,000. Prices increased over the next few years. There
34 was a negotiation that went ahead for some weeks at
35 \$360,000 for the plate. Unfortunately the person wanting
36 to buy the plate died, so that died.

37
38 Last year, and this is 21 years after I bought my
39 plates for \$200,000, there was a business sold - one plate
40 in Grafton - for \$127,000. There is a negotiation going on
41 now for less than \$100,000 for a plate. We welcome
42 100 extra plates in the country when that sort of things
43 happen!

44
45 Two years ago my overheads were \$56,000. Last year
46 they were \$70,000. This is for insurances, fuel and things
47 like that. I didn't replace anything, except an office

1 computer, which cost me \$1,900. I have had a 23 per cent
2 increase in overheads in one year - me, one bloke.
3

4 We have 13 cabs in our fleet plus our maxi taxi. We
5 work a 13-week roster, so you do the same job four times a
6 year. It has been a very successful roster. It is just a
7 starting roster. We don't tell our drivers when they must
8 finish. We say, "You must have the car out there then."
9

10 There are 12 operators that own 13 plates between us.
11 We have decided - and it has been going on now for one
12 month - that every thirteenth week, one car will take the
13 week off because there are just insufficient fares out
14 there to keep us viable. We have drivers who are,
15 complaining, and quite rightly, that they're working for
16 \$3, \$4 and \$6 an hour. They get 42 per cent commission and
17 that is what they have been getting.
18

19 I am very lucky. I have two drivers. My principal
20 driver is my son-in-law. My second driver is my daughter,
21 so we work between us. My son-in-law started at 4 o'clock
22 one afternoon. He got a job a bit after 10 o'clock at
23 night and finished at half past 4 in the morning. The car
24 took \$139. \$60 would have been his. I just said, "Keep
25 it." I wasn't going to take the rest from him.
26

27 If we expect people to get out there and work for
28 13 hours, or 12.5 hours, and expect them to live on \$60 or
29 \$70 after an all-night shift, we're dreaming. I look
30 forward to seeing 100 extra plates out in the country!
31

32 We had 27 plates in Grafton before I joined the
33 industry. I believe that when South Grafton Red Cabs
34 combined with Grafton Cabs, seven plates were owned by one
35 man. I think they might have been handed in. I am not
36 aware of any plates that are on hold in the Grafton area.
37 Thank you.
38

39 MS TOWERS: It would be interesting if people could tell
40 us what proportion of their journeys are booked versus rank
41 and hail, if that's possible, and if that proportion has
42 changed at all? The booked trips are now unregulated, so
43 you can charge whatever fare you like. The rank and hail
44 is regulated. We are interested in what part of your
45 business is rank and hail.
46

47 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: That's not true. Booked jobs can't be

1 dictated to when you have a contract, like we do with the
2 government. The TTSS jobs are still regulated. We do a
3 lot of TTSS work. We live in what is an ageing community.
4 It is not true to say that we can tell people what we are
5 going to charge them. That is not true.

6
7 MS TOWERS: But you have got that from a competitive
8 tender --

9
10 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: No, the TTSS work is government work.
11 It is working for the disabled community and it is
12 regulated by the taxi meter.

13
14 MR PORTEOUS: Country cabs can't charge their customers
15 what they like. Our greatest customer base, Monday to
16 Friday from 8am to 5pm, is pensioners. We can't turn
17 around and say, "Right, we are going to charge you \$15 for
18 an \$8 fare."

19
20 MS TOWERS: I am not suggesting that, I am just curious
21 about what the split is between rank and
22 hail and booked.

23
24 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: In a place like Woolgoolga, rank and
25 hail work tops, maybe 5 per cent - maybe, tops. So with
26 everything else that you could call booked work, we are not
27 free to set our price. That is not true.

28
29 MS VINCENT: How does that split go then? Out of the
30 booked, how many would be --

31
32 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: It comes to at least 50 per cent of our
33 work.

34
35 MS TOWERS: That's through contract?

36
37 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: That's contract work, yes. At least,
38 50 per cent, if not more.

39
40 MS COPE: We have someone up the back on the left, then
41 the gentleman up in the back right corner after that.

42
43 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: Sorry to butt in.

44
45 MS COPE: No, that's all right.

46
47 MR CLARK-SMITH: My name is Ashley Clark-Smith. I am from

1 Casino Cabs and I am the president of the North Coast Taxi
2 Council.

3
4 I would like to start by thanking you for allowing us
5 to be able to come and talk to you about our issues. I am
6 hoping that this roadshow is not just to pacify the
7 industry. I was a part of a meeting in Sydney in one of
8 the offices. I sat down and gave my thoughts and my
9 suggestions with some of my colleagues who are here in the
10 room.

11
12 I am going to go over some things that you have
13 probably heard, but, unfortunately, some of the things
14 about plates and recommendations have already been aired to
15 the public. I am really not sure what today is all about.
16 All I know is that it is all about making changes to our
17 industry.

18
19 I purchased my family business about three years ago
20 from my mother. My father passed about 11 or 12 years ago.
21 I paid just under \$3 million for the whole set-up. I went
22 into the industry because of the rules and regulations. I
23 like the whole idea of a regulated industry that has been
24 approved by the Ministry of Transport. However, as of
25 today, our industry has changed, and I believe not for the
26 better.

27
28 We are here today to discuss recommendations for extra
29 plates for the country. I have 13 plates in Casino. Out
30 of those 13 plates, I have four on hold. I am thinking of
31 placing another plate on hold, in the next month or so,
32 which means I will have five plates on hold in Casino.
33 I would rather have these plates not on hold and on the
34 road so they can work. They actually cost me money to be
35 off the road. In my case it would be devastating if more
36 plates got released into Casino or other areas. As I said,
37 I would rather have all my plates on the road, working
38

39 What would happen in my town - and I know there are
40 others in the same situation as me - if there were more
41 taxi plates released in a town that is already over-plated,
42 is that I would assume those new plates would work in good
43 times and leave the late hours and early mornings to the
44 existing plate owners. I can tell you the existing drivers
45 at the moment work those hours. Mostly those new plates
46 won't do the early mornings and late nights. They will not
47 work all those hours.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

In our industry, we do a lot of work related to domestic violence. We are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We do stuff in early hours in the morning, such as transferring nurses to and from hospitals to keep the ambulances on the road doing what they should be doing. We do little things for a lot of people in the early hours of morning, making sure they get on trains, picking up people from trains, taking them to and from the airport.

We also act as security for people in the early hours of the morning. If there are any suspicious people around, police come to us and we let them know what is going on. I can assure you if these plates hit on the road, the service will diminish, after a period of time within the country. We often collect mail. We check on people if they have not been seen for a while. We do that little bit extra. It would be a shame to lose these value-added services that we do in the country, and mostly at no extra charge.

Another thing I found a little weird was that, at no time did I ever hear from IPART. I would have thought you might have asked people like myself for our complaints register, our pick-up and delivery times. My pick-up times are five and seven minutes. These are things you will not see if our towns were to be given extra plates.

I have no issue with releasing plates in a town that does not have a taxi service or is not being serviced by another town. People trust our taxi dome, so where there are towns without cars, they would trust the old taxi dome.

I have a couple of questions. I think you have answered one, where you gave the numbers for how many plates that you thought need to be released in the country. What is the process for releasing plates in a town that has already-existing taxi plates? What would you do in that circumstance?

MS COPE: The current recommendation is that the plates would go out to competitive tender and it would be businesses who could decide where they wanted to operate those taxis.

As I said in my introductory comments, though, these are draft recommendations, and we are now listening to what people say about them and, therefore, we want to hear from

1 you about what your views are on that.

2

3 MR ROGERS: Deborah, could you just elaborate, though,
4 that IPART have only two zones - designated and exempt.
5 I wonder whether you could elaborate on that.

6

7 MS COPE: If I may, I might leave that, because that will
8 be dealt with in the next presentation. We will go through
9 that in some detail then, so it is probably better to wait
10 for that. Yes?.

11

12 MR CLARK-SMITH: You were talking before about the taxi
13 plates and the pricing. I agree with everyone who has
14 spoken about that. The price on the plates has actually
15 come down, to the point that I went and bought another
16 plate in Lismore and I paid nearly \$100,000 less there. It
17 is not that you don't have the work, and Lismore is on
18 rotation as well, where they have vehicles that don't go on
19 the road when realistically they should be.

20

21 That is the case in our town as well. We have
22 vehicles off the road when realistically they should be on
23 the road. On a Friday and Saturday night, at any one time,
24 I have three or four vehicles just parked, and I would love
25 them to be on the road. I have two people who want to
26 drive my cars, but I just don't have the work for them. It
27 is extremely hard to give a driver a good quality of life
28 so that he can earn good money out of the taxi industry.
29 We have things like school education work and the TTSS
30 dockets that really help out our industry. If we lose
31 those things, that would be extremely detrimental to our
32 industry. Thank you very much

33

34 MS COPE: The gentleman in the back corner. Did you want
35 to say something? No? Down the front then.

36

37 MR CASEY: I have short question: This 137 or more
38 plates - I forget how many you said you are going to issue -
39 just where do they come from? Do you print another 137 out
40 in Sydney and start putting them out to tender? If there
41 are a couple of small towns around that don't have plates
42 and you want to put them out there, okay, that would be
43 fine. Say, if there were 10 towns in New South Wales that
44 need one plate or there were 30 towns that desperately need
45 them, why can't you, instead of printing more, go out to
46 the country towns which have plates sitting on the shelf
47 and give them a proper price for them and move them to

1 another town to help a lot of these people who are trying
2 to get out of all these plates that are sitting on the shelf
3 and are not making any money.
4
5 MR WILLETT: On that, the alternative might be just to
6 reduce the restrictions on where existing taxis could
7 operate. That would provide the same sort of result,
8 wouldn't it?
9
10 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: So the transaction would happen between
11 the two entities rather than you being involved?
12
13 MR WILLETT: That's right.
14
15 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: Have you done an audit on how many
16 plates are on hold in New South Wales?
17
18 MR ROGERS: There are 78 according to a report in the
19 country.
20
21 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: There are 78 on hold?
22
23 MR ROGERS: In a report, it is 150 across the whole of New
24 South Wales. I think it is 78, which is 73 and five in
25 Newcastle. That is what the report says. We, as the NSW
26 Taxi Council, in our submissions, suggested that we focus
27 on the plates that are being kept on hold before issuing
28 new licenses. Unfortunately that was rejected in the draft
29 report.
30
31 MR WILLETT: Is that a possible solution to getting more
32 use out of those taxi licences?
33
34 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: You would have to change the licence
35 conditions.
36
37 MR WILLETT: Yes, indeed.
38
39 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: But that may be a solution.
40
41 MS TOWERS: Is that something that people would be
42 interested in?
43
44 MR ATKINS: If the price is right.
45
46 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: Could you sell your on-hold plates for
47 that?

1
2 MR CLARK-SMITH: I would love to be in the position where
3 I would have the opportunity to go into that town myself,
4 but, like I said, to me personally, I would rather have
5 something I could pull off the shelf. I have a lot of
6 money sitting there. I am probably the one who has the
7 most money amount sitting out there. I can tell you, I
8 would do whatever it would take to get my plates back out
9 on the road.

10
11 MR WILLETT: That's interesting. Thank you.

12
13 MS PORTER: I know that we have had four taxis licences
14 come into Coffs Harbour --

15
16 MR WILLETT: Could you provide your name, please.

17
18 MS PORTER: -- since this rideshare has come in as well,
19 so that makes it a bit weird. We are running bases here as
20 well and they are having trouble financially. If you put
21 on more cars here and less money is coming in, there would
22 not be enough drivers. We are flat out getting drivers in
23 Coffs Harbour, which, as you know, is a pretty good place.
24 It just will not help us if you put on more plates here.

25
26 MS COPE: Sorry, what is your name, please?

27
28 MS PORTER: Lorraine Porter.

29
30 MR SYD MCKENZIE: My name is Syd McKenzie, and I own a
31 plate at Port Macquarie. I wish to make a brief comment.

32
33 I used to do the rosters in Port Macquarie. In a
34 10-week roster, we ripped 80 shifts out of our roster.
35 That gives you an idea of how many drivers are losing or
36 can't make enough money.

37
38 MR SAUNDERS: We also have a roster, as do most of the
39 other places now. We have reduced the cars. We take one
40 car off just about every day. The roster is variable. We
41 have an 11-week roster with 11 taxis. On the busiest day
42 in the town, we would have five taxis on, at once. You
43 might have 11 taxis in the town, but there will always be
44 several taxis parked for the entire day, especially on
45 Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays.

46
47 On Sundays, there are two taxis on during the day and

1 one of those would also have to work in the evenings to
2 help the other taxi as a back-up because there are only two
3 in the evening. There are some shifts where they have to
4 have time off during the day. Their shift might be 14 or 16
5 hours long but they would have a big break in the middle.
6

7 The other thing is we might have done something
8 slightly different. We increased the percentage for the
9 drivers in order for them to have a reasonable return, but
10 it means that the network gets less. The drivers are
11 getting 50 to 55 per cent of the income. On a day, they
12 might take home \$100, \$150, on a bad day, less; on a good
13 day a bit more. That is for working for an entire day. It
14 is not a huge amount, especially because they will not be
15 able to work five days a week, because they will be
16 rostered off. The maximum they can work is four days a
17 week. They have a four-day week. There will only be one
18 or two taxis on some days and other days more.
19

20 Friday nights, we have taken cars off. Saturday
21 nights, we have taken cars off. Friday is the only day of
22 the week we have not reduced the cars during the day in the
23 last five years, but before that, there were cars reduced.
24 Every day there is a slightly different numbers of cars out
25 there just to provide the service level that the customers
26 want. We don't want to keep them waiting more than
27 10 minutes, if we can help it.
28

29 The only problem is that when everybody goes shopping
30 at the same time and everybody goes home at the same time,
31 there is a bit of a wait, but that's maybe once a
32 fortnight. Other than that, the taxi is there within five
33 minutes. In order to cover for those times, we have people
34 like myself, my wife, and others who can be called in at
35 short notice. If we have a huge demand, we can come out
36 and help. We might to do an hour's work. That is just for
37 peak period. You can't pay people to be on standby, but
38 they need money. The only people who can do that are
39 people who are doing office work, at other times.
40

41 As a job, if everybody had their own taxi, we would
42 have 12 taxis in town and they would not be able to work
43 most of the time. Last time IPART came through, they said,
44 "Oh, we want to have everybody in their own taxis. People
45 are artificially holding the price up." That's rubbish.
46 If you have an owner and a driver, they are all going to
47 want to go out during the day when it is convenient. They

1 will all want to be at home in bed at night-time and there
2 will be no service. The only way to have a service for the
3 customer is to have the taxis employed by Combined, or
4 something, so that they control whether there is a taxi on
5 when needed. Otherwise you would not have anyone on at
6 night. We have somebody rostered on to go throughout the
7 night. They might sleep five hours one night, with a phone
8 in their ear, and another night they might be working all
9 night; it just depends on the customers. However, if we
10 didn't have the car out there, we would have to shut the
11 network down and say, "There are no taxis available."
12

13 MS COPE: We will take two more speakers in this session.
14 Then we will go to the presentation. After that, people
15 will have a chance to comment again.
16

17 MR WEST: Just digressing a bit, in my little area of
18 Macksville, I don't see rideshare or Uber as being a major
19 concern, because if I had to rely on day-to-day stuff
20 without my contracts, I would close up shop, and so would
21 they.
22

23 My biggest opposition that I see is community
24 transport. Is it public knowledge what their vote is or
25 what their budget is in certain areas? The reason I ask
26 that is because the more I look, the bigger they are. They
27 would outweigh me 10:1, with my three little vehicles they
28 would have - well, not 10:1, maybe 3:1 - close to
29 30 vehicles. The only good thing about me is I work 24
30 hours; whereas, they go 9 to 5, so I might get a bit of a
31 spill-over.
32

33 Is there any way that taxi operators, or whatever, can
34 find out, is community transport a bottomless pit? I know
35 we are not, and they are our opposition in the country more
36 so, in my opinion, than rideshare and the Ubers.
37

38 May I add as well I am starting to find that the NDIS,
39 which was going to be the big saviour, is a predator
40 already, because the charity groups are becoming taxi
41 services as well instead of us looking after the disabled.
42 Thank you.
43

44 MS COPE: The gentleman up the back.
45

46 MR READ: Steve Read, North Coast Taxi Council
47 Secretariat.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

I think, with respect, you need to give due consideration to the taxi industry's response times. We previously had to report that to Transport for NSW. I think everyone in this room would be quite proud of their response times. We provide a service our clients. Most of us have been in the industry for 40 or 50 years. We know our business.

Many people have spoken about how we roster. We roster so that people are serviced effectively. Many people have said they take cars off the road when they don't need them and they put on a full fleet when they do need them. There have been many times throughout the year in this industry where lots of cars have sat idle. You guys are suggesting to put on 130-odd new cars.

As Martin Rogers has already said, the people who come into this industry may buy those 130 cars and just do a circuit. They will come to Coffs Harbour, as Martin said, when the off-road thing is on. They will go to Bathurst for the car races. They will go to Tamworth for the Country Music Festival. They will come and they will go. They will take the cream and disappear, and they will not be here for the industry long term.

I suggest that you recommend to Transport for NSW that people who tender for these new licences be limited to accredited existing networks. The network operators know when they need vehicles and they should be the ones who are permitted to tender.

One comment I would like to make as well is that the taxi industry is the first transport mode and it is the final transport mode. We are a self-sufficient business. We link in with government-funded transport operations, as in buses, ferries and trains. They all subsidised by the government. Taxis are just left to run their own show. Why is that? Why do you not consider the valuable door-to-door transport that we provide and work with us and help us rather than trying to kill our industry. Thank you.

MR WILLETT: Could I get some responses to the idea that the extra tenders and licences, as proposed in our draft report, be available only to existing operators. Is that something that is supported or are there other views around

1 the room?

2
3 The point was just made that the extra licences, the
4 10 per cent that we referred to in the draft report, could
5 be restricted to existing operators. I am just interested
6 whether there are any other views on that proposal around
7 the room because it is quite interesting.

8
9 MR DAWSON: Brett Dawson, Port Macquarie Taxis.

10
11 In regards to that, it is obvious that the feeling of
12 those here in the room is that we don't require another
13 137 plates in regional areas, apart from the fact that
14 there are many plates on hold currently.

15
16 There is another issue when you look at the last
17 release of plates out of the Sydney metropolitan area. You
18 are chasing a competitive environment. We have cabs off
19 the road and plates on hold. You are intending to release
20 extra plates. However, you are not intending to dictate,
21 or even review, what areas they possibly could go, let
22 alone work on a submission and a review about the industry.
23 All this is based primarily on tainted data.

24
25 How do you think that it would help or have any
26 justification whatsoever when you look at the city release
27 of leases and you have institutional investors such as
28 Cabcharge taking approximately 70 per cent of the licences
29 in one hit? Let alone restricting who can get them, I
30 think there is possibility of a multitude of different
31 avenues to be looked at, apart from releasing any plates at
32 all. If you were to do that, you would have to look at the
33 demographics of the situation.

34
35 As a lot of people have mentioned, it is terrible to
36 have cars off the road. We are supporting our community.
37 We do a big job in the community that others are not doing.
38 We are heavily impacted, particularly in places like Port
39 Macquarie which has been subject to state and federal
40 electoral toying, I suppose, over the last decade, which
41 has given us an influx of community transport. We have a
42 very large problem at the moment with courtesy bus
43 services.

44
45 For instance, on the Australia Day weekend, which has
46 just gone past - as you would appreciate it was on a
47 Friday, leading into a long weekend, as opposed to last

1 year when it was on a Thursday, followed by a workday and
2 then a weekend - when you were looking in the high 20 per
3 cent increase in volume of jobs, and we are talking about
4 rank and hail work, the hail percentage was down nearly
5 10 per cent that weekend. I think there are far too many
6 issues and not enough detail and not enough understanding
7 to even put this submission forward, whether it be a review
8 or not. I just don't think your homework has been done.
9

10 MR WILLETT: Thanks for that. Are there any further
11 comments on that point?
12

13 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: Yes, just on that point. I asked the
14 question earlier about how did you come up with that 137
15 number? No-one has been able to tell me that yet. If it
16 is because of service, you need to tell us that. Is it
17 because of service or lack of it?
18

19 MR WILLETT: I understand that the presentation will go
20 into that point.
21

22 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: All right.
23

24 Just on the other point about the allocation of
25 plates, I don't think you are suggesting that only
26 authorised operators get those plates. Is that what you
27 were suggesting?
28

29 MR DAWSON: That's exactly what I am suggesting.
30

31 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: IPART will be upset about that.
32

33 MR WILLETT: I am not. I am open to it as a possibility.
34

35 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I think what you first need to do is an
36 audit on the surplus supply of taxi plates in country New
37 South Wales. All these people are telling you that they
38 have vehicles on hold, plates on hold, rosters being
39 operated with only half their fleet on the road. I told
40 you that only 30 per cent of my fleet operates at night.
41

42 If it is a service level thing, I will tell you how to
43 fix it. Instead of all the funding that you give to
44 government entities, like community transport and NDIS, you
45 could pay a local taxi operator to have a vehicle on the
46 road. It will solve your problem instantly, because we
47 can't afford to put a driver out there and make any money.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MR WILLETT: Do you know what needs to be done to do that?
We are talking --

MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I have no idea.

MR WILLETT: I am just interested in --

MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I have no idea, but I know certain things have happened in Coffs Harbour, for example, they put things like on NightRide buses, funded by council. That one comes from you guys. That comes from state government. If you really want to increase service levels in country areas, give the existing taxi system that money and we can provide that service.

MR WILLETT: Thanks for that. We will look at that.

MR ROGERS: If I can make a comment, I think in our submission we suggested, "Let's fix the plates that are on hold". Then we suggested that, potentially, if new plates were to be issued, maybe you would first consider those operators that have built up good business. That was part of our submission.

MS COPE: I think we might move on to the presentation given that we are starting to get into the nuts and bolts of the details. I will now call on Heather Dear, from the IPART secretariat, to do a brief presentation about the recommendations and then we will come back to further discussion.

IPART's draft recommendations on licences and fares

MS DEAR: Thank you, Deborah.

I will now run through the draft recommendations and draft report - many of which have been touched on already this morning. IPART has been charged with looking at the number of taxi licences outside Sydney and maximum fares for rank and hail services across New South Wales, on which we are seeking feedback.

We considered both a small and a very large increase in taxi licences. On balance, we recommended a 10 per cent increase on licences for outside Sydney. This was aimed at reducing the cost of acquiring a licence and helping the

1 industry transition and compete in the new point to point
2 transport market by lowering costs and making more taxis
3 available.
4

5 A 10 per cent increase in the number of licences would
6 also be likely to improve taxi services for customers, for
7 example, by reducing waiting times. We recommended that
8 the licences be released in several tranches throughout the
9 year to help develop the market for licences.
10

11 We were also required to look at where the new
12 licences should be able to operate rank and hail services,
13 noting that there are no longer operating area restrictions
14 on booked services. However, for existing licence holders,
15 the current operating area for rank and hail work remains.
16

17 We have proposed two zones to ensure that some new
18 licences would be available in the regional and remote
19 areas that would not otherwise be able to attract any new
20 taxi licences under a competitive tender process.
21

22 The zones we have proposed are a designated zone,
23 shown in blue on the map, which would be those operating
24 areas with larger populations upwards of 10,000, as well as
25 areas where there has been recent high-value licence
26 trades, have more than five taxis or are in a busy tourist area.
27

28 The rest of New South Wales would form an exempt zone,
29 shown in grey, including the areas that are already
30 currently exempt from fare regulation. The new licences we
31 propose would be specified for one or either of these zones
32 and would need a separate allocation of licences for each
33 zone.
34

35 As shown on the screen, based on the total number of
36 taxi licences as at 1 September last year and, as has been
37 discussed this morning, we have recommended 124 new
38 licences to be released for competitive tender in the
39 designated zone, and an initial allocation of 13 new annual
40 licences for the exempt zone, this being a 10 per cent
41 increase.
42

43 We have recommended that licences issued for the
44 exempt zone be offered for an annual administrative fee
45 reflecting the cost of issuing the licence, similar to the
46 new fee for annual licences recently issued in Victoria.
47 However, if there was over subscription at this low fee, we

1 have recommended that Transport for NSW issue further
2 licences for the exempt zone.

3
4 We have recommended that licences issued for the
5 designated zone would be able to provide rank and hail
6 services anywhere in New South Wales outside Sydney -
7 that is, anywhere across both the designated and exempt
8 zone. This is consistent with the government's response to
9 the recommendations of the Point to Point Taskforce.

10
11 New licences issued for the exempt zone would be able
12 to provide rank and hail services to all areas in the
13 exempt zone. However, they would not be permitted to go
14 across into the designated zone for rank and hail services.
15 This is intended to prevent those low-fee licences moving
16 into areas where the licence values would be higher and
17 to help and attract and maintain services in the exempt zone.

18
19 As also shown on the screen, we have recommended
20 retaining maximum fare regulation for rank and hail trips
21 outside Sydney in the designated zone, but removing it for
22 the exempt zone, knowing that fares for booked trips in
23 taxis are no longer regulated in New South Wales, apart
24 from, as we have heard, for the contract work.

25
26 We are not recommending any changes to the existing
27 fares in the designated zone, except allowing pass through
28 of the passenger service levy, which has started today.
29 If a town is in the designated zone and the urban fare
30 schedule currently applies, it will continue to apply,
31 and if a town is in the designated zone and the country
32 fare schedule currently applies it will also continue to
33 apply.

34
35 We were also asked to look at maximum non-tariff
36 charges for rank and hail trips, such as the maxi taxi
37 surcharge and the cleaning fee. We are not recommending
38 any changes to these, except to take account of the
39 passenger service levy, which we have recommended be
40 identified as a separate charge in the fares order, and we
41 understand that is what has already occurred.

42
43 I'll now hand back the hearing to the Chair. Thank
44 you.

45
46 MS COPE: Thank you, Heather.

47

1 **Discussion on IPART's draft recommendations**

2
3 MS COPE: Would anyone like to start with any comments on
4 that?

5
6 MR READ: Yes, I would like to make a quick comment.

7
8 One of the first things you said in your determination
9 was that it would reduce waiting times. Can you tell me
10 what research did you do on waiting times, if any, please?

11
12 MS COPE: We did do a survey on customers in the country
13 areas, and waiting times was one of their highest
14 criticisms of taxis. You are saying that the waiting times
15 are very short, but there is potentially a customer
16 perception issue, at least, because that was their greatest
17 criticism of taxis.

18
19 MR PORTEOUS: Customers will tell you that they have been
20 waiting for 20 minutes, but when you look at the time
21 between when they called and the time you got there, it
22 will be six minutes. But they will say 20 minutes.

23
24 MR HARRISON: My name is Howard Harrison. I have no
25 financial stake in the taxi industry, but I have been
26 around since - well, I got my licence when I was 21 and
27 I am now 75.

28
29 When IPART came into existence for the taxi industry,
30 and I don't mean to be historical here, in those days,
31 IPART, along with a very experienced taxi/hire car
32 department full of people who understood the industry, were
33 really keen to understand the industry and the value of
34 industry and what it cost.

35
36 A few years later, IPART management changed and that
37 whole system changed. They just became a whole lot of
38 economists who just believe that competition makes
39 everything right, which, of course, it does not.

40
41 When I read this pamphlet, I am very disappointed, and
42 I am sorry, but to me I don't think that the thoughts of
43 IPART right now are any different from those bad thoughts
44 years ago, because motivation is the key to any decision.

45
46 This pamphlet says that maximum fares will attract new
47 services. To me, IPART is more about devaluing the

1 industry than it is about increasing services, because
2 these decisions or these recommendations will not increase
3 service in any way, shape or form. They will have the
4 opposite effect.

5
6 I am sorry, but IPART does not seem to understand -
7 that is the modern people at IPART - nor does the Minister
8 for Transport, what the taxi industry was for in the first
9 place. The taxi industry was there to give a 24-hour
10 back-up service to mass transport. That was one of its
11 basic jobs. So in the early hours of the morning when a
12 country train such as the Mudgee mail came in at
13 Parramatta, there were taxis at the station. That is what
14 we used to do. It is very important that the taxi industry
15 remain viable so that those unsociable hours are filled by
16 the taxi industry.

17
18 Fares were also set up in a way that the lower income
19 people could afford them and, of course, the corporate
20 people could also afford them. For a driver to earn a
21 living in a 12-hour shift, he had to get his fair share of
22 the low-income stuff, which really didn't make him any
23 money when he had to sit on the rank for two or three hours
24 and did not make anything, but he could make it up in the
25 busier hours, and that way everything got covered.

26
27 Now, under the new system, people are allowed to come
28 in and cherry-pick - that is right word, Martin - all the
29 good stuff off the top, and the only thing left for taxi
30 drivers now are the drunks on the rank and the low-paying
31 fares. Because the drivers can't get that other work, they
32 will not drive taxis. By recommending all of the stuff
33 that you have got here, it will only, in the long term,
34 mean that taxis will just pick and choose the high-end of the
35 market, and that will be all. The train that comes in in
36 the early hours of the morning will not have any taxis on
37 the station rank.

38
39 When you put these up for competition, the only people
40 who will buy them are existing taxi drivers. For every one
41 you sell, you are going to take another plate off the road.
42 IPART does not seem to grasp any of this, with this
43 mentality of yours. The industry played a vital part. It
44 is now being said, "These taxis are ripping us all off."
45 That is a mentality that is dangerous and it is destroying
46 the industry. It is destroying the faith of the public in
47 the industry. It will destroy any early hour - unsociable

1 hour - transport for the people who really need it.

2

3 It says here - what is this nonsense? Oh, yes, it
4 says here, "This would mean more taxis available to do rank
5 and hail work where they are most needed." Now, who needs
6 it most? Is it the lady coming home standing on an empty
7 taxi rank at 11 o'clock at night or some drunks at the
8 football stadium? Who needs it the most? This sort of
9 mentality does not seem to now invade the Ministry of
10 Transport or IPART. Thank you.

11

12 MR SYD MCKENZIE: When you refer to service, the taxi
13 industry in the country has always monitored the ranks.
14 The RTA used to check that we monitored the ranks and
15 provided a good service. That used to be done by radio
16 calls back to the base. Nowadays it is done by videos;
17 video cameras are mounted on some of our ranks. Some of
18 our other ranks have phones that they we are paying for
19 that are put at the ranks so they can ring in quickly. At
20 the airport we supply an airport marshal to protect people
21 and call the cars out to the airport as quickly as
22 possible. Service is certainly a very high priority in the
23 country.

24

25 Talking about IPART, I remember one of the biggest
26 kerfuffles we ever had in the Port Macquarie network at
27 board level was when IPART recommended a fare increase that
28 we did not support. It was very, very contentious, and we
29 were not going to put that fare increase out. In the end,
30 from memory - this may not be correct because it is only
31 from memory - we spoke to the RTA and I believe they said
32 that if we did not take that increase, we would never be
33 able to catch up in the future in better times. Thank you.

34

35 MS COPE: One of the recommendations that we have not
36 talked about is that fares do not increase. We had
37 comments in Sydney, where people said, "We just can't
38 increase fares in the current environment." Then we have
39 had some comments here that fares should be able to
40 increase. What is the view? Is it seen that no increase
41 in fares is just practical reality of the industry at the
42 moment or is there a view that fares should increase?

43

44 MS TOWERS: And also what the impact do you think a fare
45 increase would be on people actually catching rank and hail
46 taxes?

47

1 MR CASEY: You say no fare increase, but we have not had a
2 fare increase in four years. A fare increase probably is
3 not justified because we are losing so much business. We
4 don't want to force that on customers. But already
5 starting today we have this \$1.10 fare increase, which we
6 don't want. Everyone here would agree it is the most
7 stupid thing.

8
9 We didn't want the \$20,000. We have had this chucked
10 at us. We don't know how many more fares we will lose out
11 of this. Our business will probably drop another 10 per
12 cent minimum out of all this. You talk about regulated and
13 deregulated. We are more regulated than ever to have all
14 this chucked on us. We would rather not have that \$20,000.
15 As I said, I am only an uneducated bloke. I left school at
16 14. The people who have come up with this, they are the
17 educated people. No wonder the country is getting into
18 trouble if the educated ones are making these sorts of
19 decisions.

20
21 MS TOWERS: The people that will potentially not catch
22 your taxis because of that increase in the surcharge, are
23 they not travelling, are they using hire cars, or do you
24 know what is happening to those people?

25
26 MR CASEY: They go back to buses. People used to take a
27 cab every week, once a week. We know them off by heart.
28 We are a small town. We know these people by name. At
29 Lismore, we might be 40,000 people, but we know our
30 customers. They don't need to tell us where they are
31 going. We go straight to their home. They don't have to
32 tell us.

33
34 We are like everywhere else. Most of our customers
35 from 9 to 5 are elderly people with their walkers and the
36 like. We now see our regular customers walking to the bus.
37 They are doing that all the time.

38
39 This is a forced fare increase. Our drivers are not
40 getting anything out of it. We are not getting anything
41 out of it. All this has done is make more paperwork for
42 us, like collecting the GST for the government. We collect
43 our GST. We give our GST statements to the drivers. We
44 are working for the government. All we are doing is going
45 downhill and we are working for nothing for them.

46
47 MR BERNE: I want to bring to attention the inequity of

1 the \$1.10 levy between town and country. \$1.10 in Sydney
2 probably represents about a 3 per cent fare increase. In
3 the country area, it is more like 10 per cent, or more,
4 because the average fare is less. Is that discrimination
5 against us in the country? Yes, it is. Can you tell me
6 otherwise? Thank you.

7
8 MR CLARK-SMITH: I know we are not really here to talk
9 about the \$1.10, but I think it is relevant when we talk
10 about fare increase. I am sure Casino is not unique in
11 this, but we have drivers in Casino who actually don't even
12 charge the booking fee - which they are entitled to charge,
13 because it is on the fare - just so they can keep the
14 customers in the car.

15
16 Over the last couple of weeks, all my drivers have
17 been concerned about the \$1.10 levy they have to collect,
18 knowing it will not be for them, it won't be for us, and we
19 are a collection agency. As has been said, it would be
20 great if we could get a fare increase here but, at the end
21 of the day, we are not actually charging any booking fee -
22 maybe not all of the time, but some of our drivers who have
23 regular customers are not charging the booking fee that we
24 are allowed to charge.

25
26 MR SAUNDERS:. I know we are not here for the levy thing,
27 but it as an example of a fare increase; it is a \$1.10
28 increase. Our average fare is about \$11 or 12. It will now go
29 up to \$13.

30
31 The point I want to make about the booking service
32 versus rank and hail is that we would have probably 95 per
33 cent of people ring up. Sometimes they will ring up from
34 the pizza shop, which is 50 metres up the road from the
35 taxi rank and we have to drive around the block to pick
36 them up. They could have walked to the rank.

37
38 Most of our customers are on fixed income. They are
39 pensioners or on welfare of some kind. They have had
40 welfare increases over the years and the taxis have not
41 gone up. I suppose the amount of money they are spending
42 on taxi fares has gone down versus their total expenditure
43 capability. So they are on fixed income.

44
45 Because our service level is so high, people do ring
46 for the taxi. As I have said, sometimes when they are
47 50 metres from the taxi stand, they will ring for the taxi.

1 They ring for the taxi and it is there within five minutes
2 most of time. If it takes more than 15 minutes, they will
3 walk, and they do. If they are a bit tight on money this
4 week, they will walk. It is not that far.

5
6 Most of the fares are \$13 or \$14 fares, and sometimes
7 they are down as low as \$8. They are generally elderly
8 people who cannot walk. Maybe they have been to the club
9 and they will catch a taxi home because, otherwise, they
10 might fall in a ditch somewhere and end up with broken
11 legs.

12
13 On the TTSS scheme, they are paying \$4 for the taxi,
14 so virtually most of the fare is paid for. The fare that
15 they will have to pay has just increased by \$1.10.

16
17 I don't think that increase will affect the customers
18 that much. If we have a taxi fare increase, I don't think
19 that wouldn't make a big difference. If they are tight on
20 the money, they can walk, but not with their groceries.
21 You can have the fixed income situation. Mum is out with
22 the kids. She has just bought three or four shopping
23 trolleys full of groceries. They would need a fair-sized
24 taxi to take all that lot home. We do see people pushing
25 the shopping trolley home, but that may be a kilometre or so,
26 but most of them would catch the taxi for that.

27
28 Bus services - yes, they could go for the buses if
29 there was enough. Country taxis are basically a service
30 utility. We have lost business to community transport,
31 which is basically duplicating our work, but it is
32 subsidised by the taxpayer. I can't understand why there
33 is duplication of the exact same work subsidised by the
34 taxpayer when taxis started off, as the gentleman up the
35 back said, to take care of that particular role. Instead
36 of it being self-funded, the taxpayer has to fork out the
37 money. If they want all taxis in New South Wales to go
38 across to community transport, they can buy us all out and
39 put the community transport in and just get done with it
40 instead of this slow torture. That's my view.

41
42 MR ROGERS: I know we have said it's not about a passenger
43 service levy either, but I think this is important because,
44 in the report, the passenger service levy is mentioned.
45 I would like to ask a question of the panel in regards to
46 page 8 of the report that says that the passenger service
47 levy should be a separate non-tariff charge. It says:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

We expect that there is sufficient scope in current fare levels for taxi service providers in most, but not all, areas to absorb the cost of the levy. However, on balance, we are recommending that the fares order include the levy as a separate fare component because ...

The question that I ask is: how did you come to the determination that taxi service providers could absorb the cost of the levy? I am just asking the panel.

MR NEIL McKENZIE: That's all right. I just want to ask something to that.

MR ROGERS: The reason I say that is if we look at the \$1.10 - I'll use an example of a network that has radio fees for operators, because the TSP in the new world is the old network that receives radio fees; just go with maths with me for a second here - you pay about \$600, on average, across the state, although it varies, so you pay about \$7,000 a year. If you have 130 taxis in your network, you as a TSP, collect around \$980,000. That TSP will do one million trips in those taxis over the course of the year. How can they absorb \$1 million for the passenger service levy when they only collect \$980,000 in revenue? I would like to understand this.

I think this is important, because it is mentioned here. If this goes out, people will say, "TSPs are making enough money. I should not have to pay the passenger service levy." I don't think the money is there to be able to pay it. I would like to understand how the maths was calculated.

MS TOWERS: That was around the licence, the lease payment --

MR ROGERS: So here you go. So the TSP can't pay --

MS TOWERS: People were paying around \$35,000 for a lease per annum and now they are paying between \$12,000 and \$18,000 per annum.

MR ROGERS: So the TSP can't pay it. There is a decrease

1 in the lease fees that go to the licence holder. So the
2 \$20,000 that you got that you are paying tax on, you are
3 paying back to pay the passenger service levy.
4

5 I wanted to note that because, in the report - I am
6 concerned about this if it goes out in the marketplace - it
7 says that you are making enough money to absorb it. I am
8 not sure that you do.
9

10 MS TOWERS: We are definitely interested in hearing your
11 feedback on that, and also your submission on those issues.
12

13 MR WILLETT: The other point I would make is that those
14 sorts of calculations do depend heavily on assumptions
15 about utilisation. We know the economics of the taxi
16 business is driven by utilisation. All the comments we
17 have heard today are about that.
18

19 What we have heard in Sydney, and what we are hearing
20 today, is that utilisation is declining. That is contrary
21 to the analysis that we did. We are very interested in
22 that because that is critically important. It is
23 critically important in the interests of the taxi industry
24 and to the economics underpinning our analysis, so we are
25 taking that on board.
26

27 If utilisation was along the lines that we had thought
28 from the evidence that was before us, then I think you
29 would be looking at a very different picture from the
30 picture that is being painted here and from the picture
31 that was painted in Sydney, so we will take that on board.
32

33 MR ROGERS: The utilisation works when the operator owns
34 the licence. If the operator doesn't own the licence,
35 utilisation is, in a sense, irrelevant because there is a
36 pay-in figure and there is a radio fee. Utilisation does
37 not impact the radio fee to a network. So you need to be
38 careful in terms of how you separate that.
39

40 MR WILLETT: Thank you.
41

42 MS TOWERS: IPART, over the last few years, has done
43 surveys of passenger use. For the last three or four
44 years, the survey have shown that taxi usage has stayed
45 roughly the same but point to point transport has
46 increased.
47

1 That is not what we are hearing here today, so we
2 would be interested in - if you could possibly get access
3 to it - your sharing the meter data, because our survey of
4 passengers has showed that point to point transport has
5 increased, but taxi usage has stayed roughly the same.

6
7 MR WILLETT: The anecdotal evidence that we are hearing
8 today from you guys who are at the coalface is very
9 important. But aggregated data is also very helpful for
10 us, so if we can get the networks to provide more
11 comprehensive data, that will help us enormously as well.

12
13 MR SAUNDERS: You said you did the survey. How did you
14 conduct the survey?

15
16 MS VINCENT: It is a survey that we get a market research
17 company to do for us. They have been doing it for us since
18 2012. It is an online panel survey. They have thousands
19 of people registered with them, who answer a range of
20 surveys about a range of topics, and the survey gets sent
21 out. We do a sample of 2,000 people in Sydney and 500
22 people in the rest of New South Wales. The panel is
23 selected so that it is a representative sample.

24
25 MR SAUNDERS: So it is a survey of mad people who fill in
26 those questionnaire online? I think they are not really
27 like a normal person.

28
29 MS VINCENT: No, the company that we use has tested the
30 panel against other kinds of random methodology, which is
31 the way that surveys used to be conducted where they make
32 phone calls or interview people in person. They don't do
33 the random pop-up on Facebook-type survey. They actually
34 have people registered with them for their panel. They
35 test that they are actually at the address they say they
36 are that, and they are actually the age and gender they say
37 they are.

38
39 MR SAUNDERS: It is still mad people who do those surveys,
40 just like I said. They are not representative of anybody.
41 People who log into those surveys, they are all crazy.
42 I don't do surveys. If somebody were to call me on the
43 telephone and ask me to do one of those, I'd say "Get
44 stuffed. I am busy", but those people who do those surveys
45 are insane.

46
47 MR WILLETT: We will take that as a comment.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MR PORTEOUS: Where did you get the 10 per cent from? Was that from a dartboard exercise? I don't go with that.

I bought my cab, as I said, in 1995. The first year I ran my cab, I did 99,000 kilometres - 99,000 kilometres. I thought, "Jeez this is good." Last year, I did just over 60,000 kilometres and the car worked every possible day it could. Nine years ago my car took \$152,000. I am not shy about telling people that - \$152,000.

Last financial year, I took \$128,000. That was an increase of \$6,000 from the previous year. I can tell you the number of flag falls I've done, and that has dropped every year - it has dropped every year.

With the thing about the \$1.10, Ed, where you are sitting, Barbara Wise was sitting. I was sitting in that chair and I said, "Is this \$1.10 going to cost us anything?" She said, "No, no, you've already got the information," Ed, I can tell you that next week we are going to have to pay someone - it will be my daughter, because she is the company secretary - to collate all this information. This was supposed to be at an absolutely no-cost increase to us.

The 134 licences, I can see we are in the market to get a few extra. I told you we have taken a car off every 13 weeks. I can tell you out of 13 plates, nine are for sale, and some have been for sale for years, but they are never likely to sell. I would hate to see any country cabs leave, particularly in areas where they are so important 24 hours a day. We have an agreement, if kids are out there and they have no money, they can get in a cab and we take them home. The parents will fix us up the next day when they can. We do the bus runs, because they are not out there - they are not out there.

I was a cab operator for 20-odd years. I've now retired; I retired a few months ago. I have enjoyed the industry. I have made some very dear friends. I have also done things like changing starters and lights. I have buried dead cats. I have done --

MR WILLETT: As opposed to burying live ones.

MR PORTEOUS: I have helped push a couple of yearlings back into the gate. These are the sorts of things we do,

1 but you want to take us off.

2
3 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I have a couple of points to make. You
4 mentioned that when you put questions out to the public,
5 response times was one of the things that they complained
6 about. Did they complain about anything else? If you ask
7 somebody the specific question, "What is wrong with the
8 taxi industry", what do you think they will actually say -
9 that the driver was rude, that he stinks, that the taxi's
10 dirty? No. They're going to say, "Oh, we had to wait too
11 long." That is what they will say, because everybody has
12 to wait sometime. Response times should be documented from
13 us. If you want that information, you get it from the
14 industry. You don't get it from asking somebody what is
15 wrong with something.

16
17 MS COPE: This is not something that comes in to our
18 decision on fares, but it is probably useful for you to
19 have a look at the survey results because there is a
20 perception issue happening between taxi and rideshare at
21 the moment. As I said, it is not about our report but, as
22 an industry, I think there is a bit of information there
23 that you might find useful. People are perceiving
24 rideshare as faster, cheaper, more convenient.

25
26 For some of the country areas, that is not an issue at
27 the moment, but it is growing. I would suggest that you
28 just don't completely dismiss that, because there could be
29 a way of helping you pitch your businesses into the future
30 by having a look at that information and thinking about
31 how, as a taxi industry, you can hold your position.

32
33 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: That's fine, and I think every single
34 operator in this room would tell you that they are offering
35 110 per cent service as much as they can. There are points
36 where we will have to make people wait. That is the nature
37 of our industry. If you take a date like the Coffs Cup,
38 you will get 100 complaints that day about having to wait
39 for a taxi. Those people are once-a-year taxi users. They
40 never have to take a taxi any other time, and they
41 complain. That happens. It's life. It's our industry.
42 We understand that, and we deal with it day to day.

43
44 The other thing, Martin, about the \$1.10 being
45 absorbed, this is just our position: our drivers take
46 45 per cent. That leaves me 55. We have all of our costs
47 on top of that, which leaves us 10 per cent of the total

1 take. If I absorb a 10 per cent increase into my fare
2 average, which is \$10 to \$12, I will make nothing. Who is
3 going to operate on that? I tell my drivers if they start
4 discounting 10 per cent off my customers, I make nothing.
5

6 I know a lot of you are saying, "We don't need a fare
7 increase. We don't need a fare increase. It's the nature
8 of our business at the moment that we should not put more
9 pressure on our customers." But how much pressure are we
10 putting on ourselves? I don't know about you guys, but
11 there has just been upward cost impact.
12

13 Peter, how much was yours - 70 grand last year, and
14 you turned over \$120,000?
15

16 MR PORTEOUS: There was a \$14,000 increase in one year,
17 and all I did was buy one computer.
18

19 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: That is just his operating costs. We
20 can't operate our business --
21

22 MR PORTEOUS: That's not setting aside funds for the
23 replacement of a vehicle or superannuation contributions,
24 or all those little things that you're supposed to do.
25

26 MR NEIL MCKENZIE: I am against freezing fares. I am
27 against it. That's my opinion, because it is basically an
28 insult to us. I can't keep drivers if they are not ever
29 going to get a pay rise.
30

31 MR CLARK-SMITH: Just going back to the survey, were they
32 paid professionally to answer the survey?
33

34 MS VINCENT: No. I think there is an incentive --
35

36 MR ATKINS: It's called cash.
37

38 MS VINCENT: -- to be on the panel not specifically the
39 survey.
40

41 MS TOWERS: It is to be on the panel, and it is used for
42 lots of surveys, not just about taxis or point to point
43 transport.
44

45 MR CLARK-SMITH: So the people who did the survey, were
46 they paid to do the survey?
47

1 MS VINCENT: Not directly, no
2
3 MR CLARK-SMITH: So indirectly they were. In what way were
4 they paid?
5
6 MS VINCENT: Over the course of year, if they are on a
7 panel and answering surveys, I don't specifically know
8 whether they get a cash payment. I don't think they do.
9 They have other voucher-type payments. However, the
10 methodology has been tested. This is how surveys work.
11 This is how Roy Morgan and --
12
13 MR ATKINS: That's rubbish.
14
15 MR SAUNDERS: I know they are using it, but it's rubbish
16 data. There are a lot of businesses running that data.
17 There are a lot of businesses deciding their plans on that
18 data, but it's rubbish data.
19
20 MS TOWERS: We have done surveys over three or four years.
21 Plus this time round, we got access to the banking data
22 across the state, and that was actual journeys in taxis and
23 actual journeys in hire cars.
24
25 MR SAUNDERS: People who paid by a bank card or a credit
26 card?
27
28 MS TOWERS: Yes, and we adjusted for the proportions that
29 are cash or Cabcharge payments. All that information is
30 showing us is that taxis have maintained the number of
31 transactions, but rideshare has increased. However, in
32 both the Sydney hearing and here, you are saying that
33 that's not how you are seeing your business.
34
35 MR SAUNDERS: I can tell you the number of transactions.
36 The bank-card-type transactions have slightly increased
37 over time. I don't know about the rest of the people here,
38 but that's compared to cash. The credit card companies are
39 encouraging people to use credit cards, and that is why
40 they have the payWave thing. The people who watch their
41 dollars don't use the payWave, because it takes two days to
42 come out. It is just that payWave is convenient.
43
44 People are buying coffee on payWave right now, and
45 they are insane. There are people who are using credit
46 cards for small transactions, and they are using them for
47 taxi fares a lot more than they used to.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MR HUGHES: My name is Paul Hughes. I am here representing Autocab, which supplies bookings, data, dispatches in Australia, and also Pacific Coast Call Centre, which is a call centre for country taxi operators.

My understanding is - and I don't know when this stopped - that each taxi network within New South Wales had to supply what was termed a delivery standards report, which was submitted to the Department of Transport every quarter. It outlined how many bookings they took for a sedan vehicle, and whether that arrived at the pick-up point within 10, 20, 30 minutes or more, and the same for wheelchair accessible vehicles. Why don't you use reports like I mentioned for collating data?

Secondly, Pacific Coast Call Centre takes bookings for 10 or 15 country networks within New South Wales. We can give you absolute War and Peace about anything you need to know in relation to data.

MS TOWERS: We would like to be in touch with you about getting access to your data.

MR HUGHES: We have a website. It is autocab.com.au, or pccc.network. Contact details or anything else required will be there.

MS COPE: Thank you.

MS LINSELL: I was going to say it is no longer a requirement to provide that data, but as the panel members have said, if you have any additional data to be considered in the review, the tribunal would be happy --

MR HUGHES: That report used to be compulsory. I don't know when it stopped being compulsory. Obviously you would have the data up until that report was no longer required. That same data is still available to the networks in the room within their data system. So if people just ask for the report going back over 12 months, then they will have up-to-date real data.

MS LINSELL: I would encourage you to provide that data as much as you can to IPART --

MR HUGHES: It would be the network that would provide it,

1 not me. Within the data system, this information is
2 available. I don't understand where you got your facts and
3 figures, but you don't get them from the actual source.
4
5 MS VINCENT: That data, as you know, is for booked trips,
6 and it has always been.
7
8 MR HUGHES: No, no; it is rank and hail as well. It's
9 rank and hail as well.
10
11 MS VINCENT: The data that was collected by Transport for
12 NSW was only ever for booked trips, because that is
13 something that IPART used to look at when that was --
14
15 MR HUGHES: As I said, the data is available for booked
16 jobs and rank and hail.
17
18 MS VINCENT: That's very good to know and that would be
19 interesting to see.
20
21 MR WILLETT: We will be in touch
22
23 MS TOWERS: We would be very interested in getting get the
24 meter data.
25
26 MR HALE: Roger Hale from Wauchope Taxis. You mentioned
27 that rideshare is cheaper. Why wouldn't it be when, in the
28 country, we are paying \$5,000 for a CTP green slip. How
29 much are they paying? Where is the level playing field?
30 That's what we are waiting for.
31
32 MR CLARK-SMITH: Getting back to this survey, when the
33 survey was conducted, was it done by people who were
34 actually in the country or was it done by just a uniform
35 survey group that you use? I think if you're going to do
36 surveys about the country, you have to do it in the
37 country. You can't have, spasmodic people, saying, "We had
38 a bad experience in the city", or whatever they have had,
39 and it is applied to the country.
40
41 MS VINCENT: No, we have separate samples. One is the
42 Sydney sample. Then we have over 500 persons from other
43 regional areas, and that's done by postcode
44
45 MR CLARK-SMITH: So the people were actually in that
46 postcode who were actually making the comments; is that
47 right?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MS VINCENT: Yes, that's right.

MS TOWERS: There are a lot of surveys on our website and they are available for people to look at.

MRS SHELLEY MCKENZIE: Whereabouts are they?

MS VINCENT: Yes, it is representative. So if there is --

MRS SHELLEY MCKENZIE: Most of our customers don't have the online facility.

MR BERNE: The first thing I would like to bring to your attention is that the lady on the left said that the utilisation of taxis has not increased over a period of time. However, the first thing you had on the screen was that Coffs Harbour run where it showed an increase. Either there is a bit of not talking to each other or it has been misrepresented. I would like to confirm here that that Coffs Harbour one is absolutely incorrect. I would like that deleted from your paperwork - full stop.

Secondly, the government is putting plates out willy-nilly in country areas. There were four plates or up to four plates put in Coffs Harbour alone. Are you going to follow that up again next year, and the next year and the next year? What do you want to do? What's your reasoning for doing that? Is it to bring the taxi industry to its knees, or is it to supply a service there that the government cannot supply, at equitable cost?

MS COPE: The additional plates could be wheelchair access vehicles; is that what you're talking about?

MR BERNE: Yes.

MR PEARCE: Daryl Pearce, Lismore Taxis.

I feel that a lot of this has come from complaints you have had from people on waiting time, on waiting to get a cab. What worries me is that, when people are waiting, time seems to go very slow for them. They tend to exaggerate.

I am actually employed by Fire and Rescue NSW. We get called to house fires. When the owner is interviewed by

1 the media, the owner will say, "Oh, but the Fire Brigade
2 took 15 minutes to get here." If you go back and look at
3 the data, you will find it was only four or five minutes.
4

5 When people are actually waiting for something to
6 happen, or someone to come, time seems to drag out for
7 them. I get customers who say, "Oh, I am in a hurry now
8 because I have an appointment at 2 o'clock", but they did
9 not ring for the cab till 5 to 2, and that sort of thing
10 happens. You can have dad going home from the club. He
11 should have been home by 7, but he gets home at 8 and he
12 says, "There were no taxis. I had to wait for a taxi."
13 I think you need to be very careful in asking people or
14 listening to people when they relate to waiting time.
15

16 I feel that maybe the issue of people waiting and
17 saying, "Oh, we were waiting" is bringing on the answer,
18 "Obviously that town needs more cabs or more plates."
19 I think you need to be careful and look at circumstances -
20 you could have road works, you could have car accidents and
21 the like - before just taking it on the fact that someone
22 said, "I had to wait 20 minutes."
23

24 MS COPE: We have been talking about the increase in the
25 taxi plates; yet there is the option for people to come in
26 and provide a transport service in a town - rideshare -
27 now, if they want to. I asked this question in Sydney and
28 I would be interested in the views that you have here. If
29 somebody wants to come into your town and provide a
30 passenger service, are you saying that you would prefer
31 them to do that as a rideshare or a different type of
32 service than to do it through a taxi licence?
33

34 MR WEST: I would prefer to do it on an equal standing
35 with all the rest of us and not get a free ticket.
36 Ridesharing, community transport, NDIS, charity groups -
37 free tickets. We don't get a free ticket. So my personal
38 view is do it on the same terms and condition that I do.
39 Get the green slip for \$5,000 or \$6,000, or whatever it is.
40 I haven't got my cheque for the \$25 refund, or whatever
41 they said they were going to give us, this year.
42

43 Back to the licence, I have two. I have one in the
44 exempt zone, so we can auction that off when you get around
45 to doing that as well. I also have one on hold in the
46 other zone, what you call the designated zone. They are
47 not there to keep my values up, because I am the only

1 operator in Macksville. They are there because, for me to
2 put another car on, or to replace that car, would cost me
3 in the vicinity of \$20,000, and I would not make that with
4 the extra vehicle.

5
6 With the other one in Gundagai, I tried to give it
7 away and no-one wants to take it on. There are a couple
8 there for you, which are in the stats of the 70-odd plates
9 that are lying around.

10
11 MR SAUNDERS: If people want an extra taxi in a town, they
12 can get one now. You just have to go and apply for a WAT
13 licence and pick it up. There is no big deal. If anybody
14 wants an extra taxi, there is absolutely no problem in
15 getting one, so that kills the first point.

16
17 The second point is about the public transport. A
18 network now - and you said they can come in any time - can
19 put in their own equivalent of an Uber-type thing or, what
20 you call rideshare. It is a different structure, but some
21 towns might prefer to have that. So, yes, you have both of
22 those options. For an extra taxi, to say "Oh, you have to
23 apply for an extra taxi licence", well you don't; you can
24 just ask for a WAT licence.

25
26 MS TOWERS: We have spoken to a number of taxi operators
27 who have said that it is more expensive for the fitout of
28 the WAT taxi. I was wondering whether you have any
29 thoughts about that, vis a vis getting a booking service provider
30 authorisation and operating as a rideshare.

31
32 MR SAUNDERS: Yes, the WAT taxis are more expensive to
33 buy, but you don't buy the licence. Because you're not
34 buying the licence, the taxi itself is much cheaper. If
35 you're paying \$50,000 for a WAT-capable taxi or \$20,000 for
36 one that is a sedan, there is an extra cost, but that extra
37 cost is a one-off up-front cost. The fuel consumption is
38 increased, so you are looking at almost 100 per cent more;
39 if you are comparing it with one the hybrids or one of the
40 old Falcons, it would be 50 per cent more in fuel costs.
41 If you average that over the year, it is cheaper than
42 getting another licence.

43
44 MS COPE: Does anybody else wish to make a comment? Any
45 other final points?

46
47 MR HARRISON: I might be a bit kinder this time. This

1 survey just absolutely boggles me. The future of the taxi
2 industry hangs on a telephone survey - I believe it was a
3 telephone survey - where people just answer questions.
4 Deborah, I think you used the two words "public
5 perception".
6

7 I have just recently moved from Dunedoo. There are
8 800 people there. There are no taxis, no buses, nothing
9 like that. Everybody knows where you are going. People
10 who know that I am from the taxi industry have said to me -
11 they've never been to the city, a lot of these people -
12 "Oh, they're the blokes who don't know where they're going.
13 The drivers can't speak English."
14

15 This is all because of what is in the newspapers.
16 It's what is on Alan Jones, and even IPART has said, "Oh,
17 rideshare services will improve taxi services." If you're
18 going to improve something, you are automatically saying to
19 people, "The service you are getting at the moment is not
20 very good", which reinforces the public perception of the
21 so-called taxi industry bad service.
22

23 For instance - if you could just give me a couple of
24 minutes here - if it is a rainy Friday morning and my car
25 won't start, I'll say, "Oh, jeez, it's a wet Friday
26 morning. I'll ring the NRMA." It's wet, and it is Friday,
27 so they will take two or three hours. I say to my wife -
28 or I should say "my partner" in this day and age - "You
29 wait for the NRMA. I'll ring a taxi." Not once would
30 I think that a wet Friday morning will make the taxi
31 service slow as well. So I will ring up Alan Jones and
32 whinge that I had to wait for 20 minutes for a taxi but I
33 won't say a word about the NRMA. It is about perception.
34 People never make the excuses for the taxi industry that
35 they make for every other industry.
36

37 You can go to the doctor's for a 12 o'clock
38 appointment. What time will you get in to see him? It
39 could be 2 o'clock of half past 2. The doctor is smart.
40 He has a sign up saying, "Your appointment time really is
41 only a fictitious figure and you will have to wait."
42

43 If IPART and the ministry want to do something for our
44 industry, I think you should be allocating some money from
45 somewhere if you have the power. Let's get the government
46 to start changing public perception.
47

1 When Bruce Baird was premier, everybody said, "Taxis
2 don't know where they're going." They had mystery riders.
3 Does anybody remember that? They had mystery riders at the
4 airport getting into taxis, and they were going to have
5 this big blitz on drivers who don't know where they are
6 going. They had to stop because they couldn't get any
7 complaints. It was just public perception. It worries me
8 that a survey done on public perception is being used as
9 the basis to destroy everyone's business. Thank you.

10
11 **CLOSING REMARKS**

12
13 MS COPE: I think that brings us to the conclusion of
14 today's hearing.

15
16 I will just say, first of all, there is a lot of
17 information that goes into this report. It has come from a
18 broad range of sources that we have been talking about.
19 One of the main ones is the public hearings that we are
20 currently having listening to you guys.

21
22 It is not that we have picked things out of the air.
23 It is not that we have got biased information that we are
24 going to stick to. It is that we have tried genuinely to
25 find the best information that we can. We then put our
26 views down in a document, in a very public way, to allow
27 people to be able to comment on that. Then we come to talk
28 to a broad range of people in a range of locations to test
29 that and find out their views. We take additional
30 submissions on that in writing from people who could not
31 make it to the hearing. After the hearings, we contact
32 people who have raised that they might have extra data that
33 we can use, and we will incorporate all of that and take it
34 into account in going forward.

35
36 I don't agree that we have come here with a closed
37 mind and that we have picked on things that we think will
38 support our view. We are truly independent, and we are
39 truly looking for the evidence to find the best way for
40 this industry going into the future, with the passengers in
41 mind, because that is what we are about - all of us. It is
42 about the service that is provided to the passengers.

43
44 I do thank you very much for the time that you have
45 spent in coming here. As I said at the beginning,
46 I recognise that you are taking time out of a business that
47 is a business that you are trying to run, and that this

1 time is valuable and therefore it is quite a commitment to
2 be coming here and talking to us today, so we thank you for
3 that.

4
5 MR ROGERS: On behalf of the NSW Taxi Council and all the
6 members that are here today, thanks for turning up again.
7 We offer our thanks to IPART, to Transport for NSW, and to
8 the Point to Point Transport Commission for travelling this
9 way to hear our thoughts on the report.

10
11 Bear in mind that 9 February is the closing date for
12 submissions. I do urge each of you to look at the
13 submissions, and 9 and 10 give the outline of the
14 recommendations. I do urge that each and every one of you
15 look at how that will impact your business and provide that
16 submission back to IPART through their website prior to
17 9 February, because it is important that we have the
18 written documentation.

19
20 Thank you for travelling here, and again thanks to the
21 panel for offering the time and to hear our thoughts on the
22 report.

23
24 MS COPE: Thanks very much.

25
26 **AT 12.55PM THE TRIBUNAL WAS ADJOURNED ACCORDINGLY**