

**Submission
No 69**

**ACCESS TO TRANSPORT FOR SENIORS AND
DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE IN RURAL AND
REGIONAL NSW**

Organisation: Uber
Name: Mr Marty Gray
Position: Senior Associate - Public Policy and Government Relations
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Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional NSW



**Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on
Community Services**

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Executive summary

Since launching the uberX rideshare platform in Sydney in 2014, Uber has changed the point to point transport landscape in NSW. Over 500,000 riders and 13,500 driver-partners across NSW now use the Uber ridesharing platform, including many riders with higher mobility and accessibility needs.

The Uber platform facilitates safe, reliable and affordable rides with fares on average around 30 per cent more affordable than the traditional point to point industry. Of all rides available on the uberX platform, 10% of total supply hours are available as UberASSIST, our mobility assistance service, rides. In addition, Uber has now launched in Newcastle and is actively considering further regional expansion.

Uber's ability to improve mobility across NSW has been made possible by the foresight and leadership shown by the NSW Government. By delivering smart, safety based regulation, the Government has provided certainty and efficient regulations for the point to to point transport industry as a whole.

Building on the Government's reforms, there is scope to further leverage ridesharing to assist mobility in regional areas, as well as for senior and disadvantaged people. Ridesharing can help provide a range of opportunities to improve mobility services and lower costs for these communities. Importantly, these can be achieved while simultaneously reducing net Government expenditure.

This submission outlines a number of opportunities that could help enhance regional and disadvantaged mobility services. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry as an important step in the next phase of ridesharing for NSW.

Uber: Overview and introduction

Uber is a technology platform that facilitates ridesharing by matching riders with drivers of underutilised personal vehicles. Our aim is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable transport everywhere, for everyone. That includes people with a disability and accessibility or mobility needs. To put it simply, everyone should be able to press a button and get a ride.

The NSW Government's point to point transport reform is well progressed with interim regulations in place since 18 December 2015, and new primary legislation - the *Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016* - passing the Parliament and consequently receiving Royal Assent on 28 June 2016.

The regulatory certainty provided by the NSW Government allowed Uber to expand to Greater Sydney and launch uberX in Newcastle in April 2016. We are currently exploring expansion into other regional towns, like Wollongong, in the next twelve months.

There are strict safety requirements for Uber's ridesharing driver-partners and their vehicles in order for them to access the technology platform, as outlined in the table below.

Vehicle requirements	Driver partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Registered within NSW- 9 years or newer and in good condition- Must have 4 doors (all with external handles)- Passed third-party vehicle inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- An unrestricted Australian driver's licence held for at least 12 months of the past two years- Pass a criminal history check through CrimTrac national database- Passport or birth certificate- Vehicle insurance (third party property damage or comprehensive)- Driver Authority issued by the RMS

Improving mobility for seniors and disadvantaged communities through innovation

The Uber technology increases mobility, efficiency and freedom for riders with accessibility needs by implementing a range of technology improvements to improve the experience for riders and drivers:

- **Efficiency and reliability:** On-demand rides are available around the clock, every day of the year, offering people increased freedom to come and go as needed, whenever and wherever they are, including in neighbourhoods that are traditionally underserved by taxi and public transit.
- **Ease of communication with drivers:** Riders can always contact drivers directly via text or call with any requests, questions or special instructions.
- **Cashless transaction:** With Uber, there is no exchange of cash. The Uber experience is seamless and also enhances rider and driver safety.
- **Accountability:** Our code of conduct includes an enforceable non-discrimination policy.
- **Real-time feedback:** Uber incorporates real-time feedback via the app, email and our website. Our customer service teams are available 24/7.

The app has also been adapted with improvements for blind and vision impaired riders. With VoiceOver iOS compatibility, riders can enable VoiceOver from their iPhone's Accessibility settings. VoiceOver can also be used in connection with a wireless braille display.

Uber is expanding services designed for people with different accessibility needs

The NSW Government's reforms combined with the rapid expansion of ridesharing demand has allowed Uber to launch service offerings accommodating individuals with accessibility or additional mobility needs, including seniors.

In May 2015, uberASSIST was launched - allowing a rider to request a vehicle on demand that can accommodate folding wheelchairs, walkers and collapsible scooters. uberASSIST driver-partners have also undertaken information sessions on the needs and requirements of people with disability, accessibility and mobility issues, developed by the Australian Network

on Disability (AND). Of all rides available on the uberX platform today, 10% are available as UberASSIST rides.

The uberASSIST service runs at no cost to Government. The AND training module for driver-partners and the outreach to disability, seniors and community groups to inform them of the service are all managed by Uber. The high level of customer service, coupled with the standard of vehicles, accessibility and reliability makes uberASSIST a popular option for people with various accessibility needs.

In addition to uberASSIST, we are actively considering how we can partner with community transport organisations to potentially deliver uberWAVs (wheelchair accessible vehicles) by applying the Uber technology to achieve better utilisation of existing vehicles.

Uber is seeking to expand to more regional areas

As demand for ridesharing continues to grow, so do opportunities to expand to regional areas. Many regional areas across NSW have limited public transport, high car ownership rates and scarce point to point transport services during peak times. In these conditions, ridesharing presents an ideal tool to improve mobility in regions that have often been underserved.

Expanding point to point services in rural and regional areas is also an important means of preventing drink driving. These areas are often poorly served by public transport, particularly late at night when drink driving is most common. As a result rural alcohol-related traffic crash rates are 1.5 times higher than in cities, with fatalities up to eight times higher across Australia¹. Ridesharing is an affordable and reliable alternative, allowing people in regional areas to return home safely without resorting to driving under the influence of alcohol.

Expanding ridesharing into regional areas would allow local residents to provide safe, reliable and affordable rides in their own cars and earn an important supplementary income. Many regional communities across NSW have high levels of unemployment, with access to jobs remaining an endemic issue. Ridesharing can help address this, with our experience in

¹ Czech et al., Comparing the cost of alcohol-related traffic crashes in rural and urban environments, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 2010

Australia indicating 21 per cent of Uber partners being were previously unemployed and 17 per cent are using Uber while looking for a full time job².

Ridesharing is flexible to increases in demand, meaning it can accommodate large fluctuations in rider numbers immediately, unlike any other transport mode. As such, ridesharing has the flexibility and scalability to provide transport services to regional tourist destinations that suffer from deficiencies in transport solutions over short periods when tourists swell. This ensures that local businesses in tourist destinations can maximise earnings during the peak season.

Case study: Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

In 2014-15 over the summer period Uber launched a pop-up ridesharing option in the Mornington Peninsula. The Mornington Peninsula is a combination of rural and coastal areas that receive an influx of tourists and seasonal locals every summer. A favourite for weekends away and events such as the Portsea Polo, the Peninsula is held back due to its size and a lack of public transport options.

The population of the Mornington Peninsula is usually around 154,000 residents but over the summer period can swell to a population size of 250,000. The area is only served by 96 taxis and limited public transport. This makes it difficult to meet the needs of the tourist population. Uber's pop up over the summer months added an additional 50 partner vehicles on the road, providing rides to more than 20,000 people.

The addition of ridesharing on the Mornington Peninsula helped inject income into the local economy through both our riders and driver-partners. Local tourism and hospitality businesses received a significant benefit with more locals and tourists taking advantage of a safe and reliable ride home. Local pubs and restaurants reported increased trade and turnover too. For example, Uber assisted more than 1,000 people to return home safely from the iconic Portsea Hotel. Following this pop up the technology remained accessible in that area with a smaller group of uber driver-partners continuing to service the area in the down-time to supplement other forms of transport.

² Uber, Submission to the Queensland Government Opportunities for Personalised Transport Review, 2016

Expanding the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme to rideshare services

The current Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) pays half the cost of each taxi trip for people unable to use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability. Until recently, the most the program paid was \$30 per trip. In 2015, 35,000 of the 46,500 people who qualified for the scheme undertook 1.9 million subsidised trips.

Following the Point to Point Transport Taskforce's recommendations, the NSW Government has increased the per trip maximum for the TTSS from \$30 to \$60 from 1 July 2016. This is the first such increase since 1999 and is an important and long awaited measure to meet the 60% increase in taxi fares that has occurred since this time³. However, the increase also means the need to ensure TTSS funds are used most efficiently is all the more necessary. The cost to Government of subsidised trips totalled \$24.7 million last year⁴. This cost is likely to increase over the forward estimates due to higher average subsidised trip costs combined with increased community demand and higher taxi fares.

Expanding the TTSS to the Uber platform could help deliver improved mobility options and reduce costs for both TTSS users and Government. Expansion of the TTSS across all service providers was a recommendation of the Point to Point Transport Taskforce which was subsequently supported by the NSW Government⁵.

In order to use TTSS funds most effectively, the scheme should be expanded across all point to point transport services, including in rural and regional areas. Like all consumers, those accessing the scheme should be permitted to choose which service they use. Products like uberASSIST provide safe, reliable and affordable transport for those with accessibility needs. At around 30% cheaper than traditional point to point transport, expanding the scheme to ridesharing will also generate significant cost savings for scheme users and Government alike.

³ National Council of Social Service, Submission to the Point to Point Transport Taskforce, 2015

⁴ Transport for NSW, Annual Report, 2015

⁵ Transport for NSW, Response to the Point to Point Transport Taskforce, 2015

Uber's on-demand, ready-to-ride model is a different offering to the majority of services operating in the accessible transport sector. This additional service opens up a new and exciting opportunity for people with accessibility and mobility needs to access transport in a different way to the traditional modes of point to point transport such as taxi, community and public transport.

Expanding regional public transport with ridesharing

Safe, reliable and affordable transport models such as ridesharing can help to overcome the 'last mile' problem by connecting riders with an existing public transport node. In this way, ridesharing can improve public transport utilisation, reduce the necessity for costly bus or carpark infrastructure, and help to improve the lives of elderly or otherwise immobile individuals.

Across a number of cities in the United States, Uber has partnered with local authorities to improve transport connectivity. These programs may take a number of forms. In Florida, Uber partnered with Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) to provide rides to and from bus stations between 7am and 9pm. PSTA pays 50 per cent of the cost of each ride up to a cap of \$6 to increase public transport utilisation.

Uber has also partnered with the city of Altamonte Springs to improve mobility in the community. Altamonte Springs subsidises 20 per cent of the cost of every trip beginning and ending in the city limits. Trips starting or ending at the city's major train station receive a larger 25 per cent subsidy. In the words of the City Manager:

Uber's groundbreaking approach has changed the way that millions of people get where they need to go. We're excited to be on the forefront of exploring how this public-private partnership can improve transport in the City of Altamonte Springs.

Elsewhere, Uber partnered with the city of Gainesville and local retirement communities to provide subsidised rides for seniors aged 60 and older.

Some 60 per cent of ridesharing trips in New South Wales are to or from an area underserved by public transport. Many of those trips are to or from the nearest transport node. A carefully-devised subsidy scheme could dramatically improve utilisation of these existing networks. In this way, newer transport models as ridesharing can improve mobility for those who are unable to drive but who do not necessarily meet the high threshold for

participation in the existing TTSS. Better transport for these individuals correlates with economic participation, social inclusion, and better health outcomes.

Uber encourages the NSW Government to explore the prospect of similar partnerships in relation to those facing mobility challenges due to geography, age or infirmity.

Appendix. Uber's accessibility credentials

Uber's use of smart technology provides a range of safety and consumer protection methods unavailable to other point to point transport services. A brief outline is provided below:

BEFORE YOUR RIDE

Driver accreditation. Prospective driver-partners receive their driver authorisation, including a stringent criminal background check and driving history check, from Roads and Maritime Services.* Partners cannot access the app until these checks are completed.

Vehicle checks. Driver-partners arrange a commercial vehicle inspection with an accredited third-party automobile inspector. Vehicles must be a four-door model and newer than nine years old. All ridesharing partners must have their own third party property damage or comprehensive car insurance. In addition, trips are covered by an AUD 20 million contingent liability insurance policy from CGU Insurance, an Australian insurer and member of the Insurance Australia Group. The contingent liability policy covers every Australian uberX trip.

Rider registration. Riders must register their name, mobile number and payment details through the Uber app. The rider is unable to make a request until they provide these details, and Uber does not permit anonymous rides.

Fare estimate. Riders request a ride from nearby driver-partners by entering their pickup details into the app. Riders have the option to see a fare estimate available prior to requesting a ride. The app always notifies the rider of any dynamic pricing ('surge pricing') rate prior to requesting a ride. Riders have absolute discretion to accept or reject the fare. When a driver-partner accepts the request, the app displays the en-route vehicle and ETA.

DURING YOUR RIDE

Shared identities. Ridesharing trips are not anonymous. The app provides the rider with the name, vehicle type, and registration number of the driver in order to identify the requested vehicle. The app also provides the driver with the name of the rider. Uber knows the identity of both parties. However, drivers are not supplied the destination until the rider enters the vehicle, preventing discrimination on the basis of destination.

En route. The Uber app guides the driver-partner to the nominated pickup location. If necessary, the rider and driver can contact one another via phone or SMS. Their

respective mobile numbers are anonymised for privacy. Upon pickup, the driver verbally confirms that the rider is the rider identified in the app. The app provides GPS guidance to the driver. The rider can monitor their progress in real-time, and share their journey in real time with friends or family via the one-touch 'share my ETA' function. Riders may also share the fare between multiple riders via a 'split fare' feature.

AFTER YOUR RIDE

Payment. The Uber app transmits trip information to servers that calculate the fare. The app then facilitates a cashless and automatic transaction from the rider to the driver-partner. Automated transactions make fare evasion or cash robbery impossible. Partners remit 25 per cent of the fare to Uber as a platform access charge and retain 75 per cent of the total fare.

Receipt. The rider is emailed a receipt containing an itemised breakdown of the fare and a map of the route taken. Uber can adjust the fare in the event of a dispute.

Feedback. The rider and driver-partner mutually rate one another via a one-touch five-star rating system. It is a condition of using the Uber platform that partners maintain a high rating. Poorly performing partners or abusive riders are identified, contacted by Uber customer representatives, and ultimately removed from the platform if their behaviour doesn't improve.

Support. Both parties may provide feedback in the app, and Uber's 24/7 support team acts on complaints swiftly – often within minutes. These systems ensure an ongoing quality control check that delivers excellent rider and driver satisfaction.

These systems mitigate the most serious and most common risks in the incumbent industry such as passenger violence, poor driver behaviour, fare evasion, fare gouging, and mishandled complaints. The Uber app and support system:

- **Incentivises** good behaviour through constant two-way feedback.
- **Deters** unethical or illegal behaviour by removing the anonymity of both riders and driver-partners.
- **Mitigates** the threat of cash robbery, fare evasion or credit card fraud since the calculation and payment of fares is done through the platform.
- **Facilitates** the prompt investigation of incidents by recording the personal details of both parties and by recording the route taken.

These features provide a level of transparency and accountability unavailable in alternative transport models.

Uber Australia is a Gold Member of the Australian Network on Disability (AND) - Australia's leading organisation working to advance the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business.

Assisting riders with accessibility needs

uberASSIST

In the Australian markets where ridesharing operates, excluding Newcastle, Uber has launched a technology offering called uberASSIST. This allows a rider to request a vehicle on demand that can accommodate folding wheelchairs, walkers and collapsible scooters. Importantly, the uberASSIST driver-partner has undertaken special training on the needs and requirements of people with disability and mobility issues.

Uber has worked with the Open Doors Organisation (US-based) and the Australian Network on Disability to create educational materials for driver-partners ensuring that riders have access to a point to point transport option that meets their specific needs. uberASSIST rides are the same price as standard uberX rides (approximately 30% cheaper than traditional point to point transport) and can be requested on demand through the uberASSIST option button in the Uber app.



Nationally, approximately 10% of total uberX supply hours are available as uberASSIST rides and this is growing. The average wait time for uberASSIST nationally is seven minutes.

All uberASSIST driver-partners and vehicles go through the same rigorous safety procedures as uberX driver-partners, including a criminal history check through the Australian Federal Police CrimTrac National Database, under the category of working with health care and vulnerable people. A full list of Uber’s requirements for driver partners and their vehicle can be found in table 1.0.

uberX driver partner and vehicle requirements	
<p>Vehicle requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registered within NSW - 9 years or newer and in good condition - Must have 4 doors (all with external handles) - Passed third-party vehicle inspection 	<p>Driver partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An unrestricted Australian driver’s licence held for at least 12 months of the past two years - Pass a criminal history check through CrimTrac national database - Passport or birth certificate - Vehicle insurance (third party property damage or comprehensive) - Driver Authority issued by the RMS

uberWAV trial - NDIS Conference

In October last year, Uber undertook its first peer to peer (P2P) WAV trial in Australia. For the duration of the NDIS 2015 conference, we had two uberWAVs on the Uber app. Utilising a P2P model, like that of uberX, we partnered with local drivers with modified vehicles to provide WAV trips for conference attendees.

The WAV pilot covered the Brisbane Exhibition and Conference Centre, surrounding hotels and the Brisbane Airport, and was available to riders accessing the uberASSIST view. The WAV vehicles were offered at the same rate as an uberX trip, which is nationally some 30 per cent cheaper than a taxi.

uberWAV customer feedback

Kathryn Lyons and her mother Vicki Lyons contacted Uber to share her story and feedback on the Brisbane uberWAV trial:

“The uberWAV vehicle was like a happy prestige service. The driver was simply amazing and informative. From the moment we got in he asked us how he could make the trip comfortable, he offered water and mints. He listened to his client and was absolutely lovely. He also went the extra mile, waiting to make sure we were inside. We never feel comfortable in a taxi, but with Uber we felt safe as the driver is used to his vehicle, he had a real understanding of the struggles of travelling with a disability, and he was more cautious. The really amazing part is that Kathryn could be sitting beside the person she was travelling with, not ‘stored in the back’ like a maxi taxi. It was an inclusive transport experience.”



Across the three day NDIS 2015 Conference, 32 uberWAV trips were requested, with an average wait time of just five minutes for a ride. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and has been included in this submission for your information.

Uber is now looking at how we can offer the uberWAV vehicle option across Australia, making accessible transport available to everyone, everywhere, within minutes, not hours.

The P2P uberWAV model also provides valuable job opportunities for people who may be locked out of the workforce owing to caring for a loved one with accessibility needs and can open a valuable opportunity for them to unlock economic opportunities with an existing asset (their special purpose vehicle). Using the Uber technology could also allow existing community transport providers to monetise their existing underutilised WAV fleets.



Vicki Lyons

October 27 at 11:48pm · Edited · 🌐

#UBER is now accessible. Yay..... trialling the wheelchair accessible transport at at NDIS new world conference.



➦ Share

18 people like this.



Vicki Lyons Uber was great, not only is it cheaper than using a taxi. The driver was wonderful and ensured we were safely inside prior to leaving. Definitely recommend this service.....

October 28 at 9:36pm

Blind, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Riders

With VoiceOver iOS compatibility, the Uber app provides a safe and reliable transport option for the visually impaired community. Riders can enable VoiceOver by going to their iPhone's General Settings and tapping the Accessibility tab. VoiceOver can be used in connection with a wireless braille display, and is available in all Uber cities.

Testimonial from vision impaired rider: *"Uber is by far the closest I have come to getting in a car and driving myself."*

With various text prompts and visual features, audio is not needed for full functionality of the Uber app. Assistive technology such as visible and vibrating alerts can help riders use the Uber app easily. In-app features, such as the ability to enter a destination or SMS your driver ahead of your trip, ensure effective communication from the rider to the driver partner.

Drivers with Disability

At Uber, we believe everyone has the right to financial independence, and flexible economic opportunities should be made available to all.

We have partnered with Enabled Employment - an innovative start-up run by people with disability, for people with disability - to extend flexible economic opportunities to thousands of its disabled members able to drive on the uberX platform. It is our hope that this partnership will encourage the 53% of people with disability with a driving licence in Australia to consider driving on the uberX platform.

Jordan lives with Achondroplasia and chose to drive on the uberX platform

"I was unemployed for a year before I found Uber. I decided to join Uber because I wanted to do something during the day while I was looking for a job. It was really hard for me to find another job because of my size, but with Uber nothing like that matters. Joining Uber was the best decision I've ever made. Not only do I get to meet new people and hear funny stories, I can also start when I want and finish when I want. I would recommend Uber to anyone looking for some extra money or finding it hard to find a job." – Jordan, Perth.

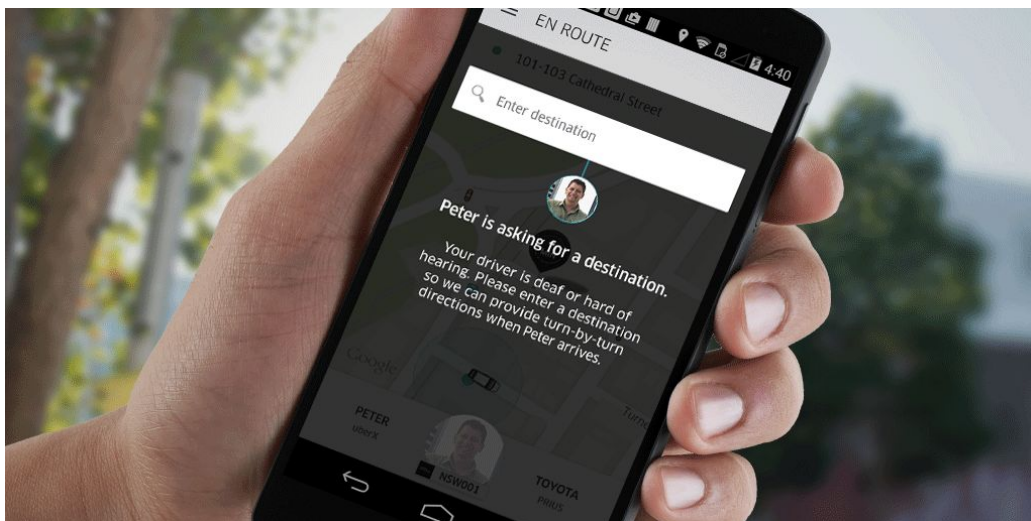
Paul was born with Spina Bifida and chose to drive with Uber to supplement his income while studying computer science

"I was born with Spina Bifida and I really should not be here (alive) to write this, let alone having the ability to walk and function reasonably well, something that the majority of people with my condition will never experience. I have my older brother and sister to thank for my ability to walk and the most amazing mother in the universe to thank for my life thus far. I am a chef by trade, but due to my condition I had to retire. Uber has now given me

the opportunity to supplement my average wage to the point that I may continue my studies and also afford a few personal splurges here and there. Finding a second job that allowed me to keep off my feet, not to mention being free to relax and enjoy meeting so many cool people and only do the hours I am comfortable with was impossible until I found Uber.” – Paul, Brisbane.

We have recently introduced app updates designed specifically for deaf and hard-of-hearing driver partners. These features were developed following extensive conversations with Uber’s deaf driver-partner community, who helped identify the interactions and improvements in the driving experience. App features include:

- The Uber Partner app signals a new trip request with a flashing light in addition to the existing audio notification.
- The option to call a deaf or hard-of-hearing driver is turned off. Instead, riders are only given the option to text their driver if they need to provide special instructions for pickup.
- The app adds an extra prompt for riders to enter their destination ahead of their trip and lets them know that their driver is deaf or hard-of-hearing.



Driver-partners interested in these features can simply sign into their account and turn these features on. The app updates not only improve the Uber experience for riders and drivers, but also extends the earning opportunity that Uber presents to the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

In Victoria, we also have a dozen deaf driver partners who actively use the technology platform for economic opportunities.

Peter Kenyon, Deaf Driver-Partner

Peter is from Point Cook in Victoria and has battled with discrimination and difficulty finding a job due to his disability. When Peter signed up to become an Uber driver-partner, he was told that being deaf did not matter.



"At first I was a bit nervous about communicating with clients but, after a few trips, things were going really smoothly and so my confidence grew. It has been challenging to get a job that I have really wanted and there is a constant reluctance of employers to put me on, due to my deafness." he said.

Partners with a hearing impairment have previously been prevented by regulatory authorities from providing transport services for reward, despite being awarded a driving licence. Uber's technology helps overcome these traditional barriers. Uber has actively been speaking to the Federal and State Ministers, in conjunction with Deaf Australia, to have the regulations around hearing impaired drivers changed.

JESSICA MAY Founder, Enabled Employment:

“Uber’s ridesharing platform presents a possibility to change the status quo, which has so far failed to create gainful economic opportunities for people with a disability.”

RACHEL MCKAY Chief Strategy Officer, Conexu Foundation:

“...technology... is a great enabler and is very quickly reducing these barriers and unlocking human potential. The enhancements Uber has made to their app, paired with their commitment to accessibility, perfectly demonstrates how the features in common technology can be applied to make communication a non-issue and get people back in the game.”

KYLE MIERS ON APP UPDATES FOR DEAF DRIVER-PARTNERS Chief Executive, Deaf Australia:

“The Uber app updates ...not only remove communication barriers between drivers and passengers, but offer more people in our community the chance to secure the financial independence they need to provide for their families and live a full life.”

MIKE MAY The Sendero Group and Mystic Access:

“I think that Uber is one of the best things that has happened for blind people in a long time.”

SUZANNE COLBERT Chief Executive, Australian Network on Disability:

“It’s great to see Uber’s focus on training drivers to know how to say and do the right thing to welcome riders with disability. We are proud that Uber has joined the Australian Network on Disability alongside other great Australian organisations to welcome people with disability as riders and drivers.”