

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: NSW Taxi Council Ltd

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NSW TAXI COUNCIL

*This submission is provided in response
to the PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH
WALES JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY.*

NSW Taxi Council Submission

PARLIAMENT OF NEW
SOUTH WALES JOINT
SELECT COMMITTEE ON
SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME
ECONOMY

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INTRODUCTION

The NSW Taxi Council is the peak body for the NSW Taxi Industry. It represents taxi networks, owners and operators, and it also advocates for better outcomes for NSW taxi drivers.

In NSW there are over 4,000 licence owners, in excess of 200 authorised taxi networks, over 6,000 taxi operators and more than 30,000 authorised drivers. Therefore the industry is the livelihood of over 40,000 people and their families.

The NSW Taxi Industry is a major contributor to the state's public transport system. It provides approximately 130 million passenger journeys each year and it meets customer travel needs right across NSW. It functions as a door through door transport service that operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The NSW Taxi Industry also provides services at times when other forms of public transport either significantly reduce service levels or cease operations altogether. Taxis are often the only form of public transport for some members of the community, and they provide essential transport services to some of the most disadvantaged people in the state. The NSW Taxi Industry was the first private transport provider to offer transport services for passengers travelling in a wheelchair. In fact, our history goes as far back as 1980 when the first wheelchair accessible taxi was established.

The NSW Taxi Industry is also a significant contributor to the state's economy, providing employment opportunities for tens of thousands of drivers, operators, and network management staff as well as for other industries which rely on economic activity that the NSW Taxi Industry generates. The taxi industry contributes to the economic generation of the state by connecting people efficiently and effectively for business, education, tourism and essential lifestyle activities. International accounting firm Deloitte Access Economics has undertaken an independent assessment of the economic contribution of the NSW Taxi Industry and has estimated the annual contribution of the industry to the NSW economy to be in the order of \$1.15 billion per annum.

The NSW Taxi Industry is made up of a complex array of providers, ranging from the licence owners (the licence being the principal legal instrument to provide a taxi service), through to operators and drivers. A licence owner may own, operate and drive a taxi, but a licence owner may also lease the taxi licence to a separate taxi operator. Authorised taxi service providers are the principal means through which taxi services are coordinated. They provide direct booking services to the public and a range of safety and other services to operators and drivers.

Authorised taxi service providers do not have a direct commercial relationship with taxi drivers. The members of taxi networks are taxi operators who pay networks a fee for use of the network's services (including its booking services).

Taxi drivers bail taxis from taxi operators and pay a bailment fee to the operator (either a set "pay-in" or a share of the takings from a shift bailing a taxi). It is the taxi driver and not the network or the operator who collects the fare from the passenger.

The NSW Government does not, unlike other forms of public transport, procure taxi services from the NSW Taxi Industry. Whilst some financial support is provided to assist disadvantaged members of the community to access taxi services, on the whole the taxi transport system has been created and continues to operate as a consequence of the many people and organisations that have committed capital to invest in the industry. The NSW Taxi Industry also generates revenue for the NSW Government through the sale of licences and stamp duty on third party licence sales. It also generates other revenue through authorisation fees and indirect taxes.

The Point to Point Transport sector consists of a wide range of service providers including the taxi industry, the hire car industry and ridesharing (collectively known as hire vehicles under the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016 (Act)), and the community and courtesy transport sector.

Ridesharing operations operated illegally in NSW from approximately April 2014 until December 2015, when the NSW Government accepted 56 of 57 recommendations made by the Point to Point Transport Taskforce, which had been established to review the passenger transport industry. At this time, a significant number of regulations contained within the Passenger Transport Regulation 2007 were removed and ridesharing operations were effectively legalised.

The Act passed parliament in June 2016 and the Point to Point Transport Regulation (2017) was rolled out on 1 November, 2017.

The NSW Taxi Industry has gone through a period of unprecedented change. The NSW Government's Point to Point Transport reforms have introduced a new approach to the regulation of the NSW Taxi Industry as an integral part of the Point to Point Transport sector and the industry has been transitioning to a markedly different regulatory environment as a consequence.

This submission focuses on the role that NSW Taxis play within Sydney's night time economy, and the key benefits that NSW Taxis bring in providing safe and reliable transport services to late night patrons in Sydney and beyond.

NSW TAXI COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE PAPER ON THE REPORT FOR THE PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

1. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY SAFETY;

Maintaining community safety is paramount whenever considering any strategies involving Sydney's night time economy.

The NSW Taxi Industry prides itself on the emphasis it places on safety for all stakeholders, including passengers, drivers, and other members of the public. Transporting members of the travelling public to their choice of destination in a safe and secure manner is at the forefront by all involved in the passenger service delivery, provided by Taxis.

Taxis in the Sydney Metropolitan Region are fitted with some of the world's most sophisticated safety equipment, including;

- Cameras which operate inside and outside of the vehicle. Cameras in Taxis are a regulatory requirement. There are minimum specifications that are required to be fitted into Taxis. These specifications are legislated under the Point to Point Transport Regulations (2017).
- Vehicle Tracking Devices fitted to all Taxis
- Back to base alarms and monitoring
- Professional Driver training with emphasis on driver responsibilities and understanding of safety management policies and procedures.

During the past, Taxis have played an important role in assisting NSW Police, as well as other agencies with their investigations on various crimes and acts. These have included supply of footage capturing important evidence or details surrounding incidents. Taxis have also been able to assist with enquiries as drivers' may have been witnesses or supplied important information to assist with investigations.

Taxi Services are delivered on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis. We believe that this level of operation is critical in supporting the state's public transport system, which in many cases is either not operating or scarce during the late hours of the evening.

Providing 24/7 services are also an important element in ensuring that services are available to members of the public, particularly during the late night operations in Sydney. Furthermore, Taxis are instrumental in providing safe transport to vulnerable members of the community, including passengers with special needs, victims of violence, such as domestic violence incidents. It is also critical that late night patrons who may be intoxicated or incapacitated in some way,

have access to taxi services as a means to transport them to a safe location, in a swift and reliable manner. Secure Taxi ranks are a fundamental means of establishing a safe and structured process to help facilitate the swift movement of patrons from local venues. Furthermore Secure Taxi Ranks are recognized as part of the City of Sydney's Late Night Transport Strategy in promoting a "Safer Sydney" initiative.

2. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES

NSW Taxis' are committed to the economic and environmental blue print for greater Sydney, and NSW. We are committed to working with the NSW Government to look at ways Taxis can contribute to a greener and more environmentally friendly outcome.

With a majority of Taxi Vehicles moving to a hybrid model, is one example of the NSW Taxi Industry taking a more social and environmental responsibility. We are now looking to introduce Hydrogen Cell as well as Electric vehicles to the fleets, with the view to transition all vehicles into the future.

Taxis in NSW are also involved in providing services to passengers with special needs; including health share and ambulatory type services. The role taxis play in this area is critical to freeing up other services so that they are directed more towards those who urgently need them. These include ambulance and emergency patient transport services.

3. ENSURE EXISTING REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS IN RELATION TO INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING SYDNEY'S LOCKOUT LAWS, REMAIN APPROPRIATELY BALANCED;

There is a role and responsibility for all levels of Government to ensure a regulatory framework, particularly in respect to safety, discrimination and privacy. Regulation needs to be balanced and enforced across all spectrums of Commercial Operations across the City of Sydney LGA. This includes Commercial and Retail operations, Transport Services as well as night time operations framework looking at communities and patronage. An example of this is restricting the consumption of alcohol in public places, including transport services such as Taxis and mass public transport.

4. ENHANCE SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY; AND ANY OTHER DIRECTLY RELEVANT MATTERS;

Taxis across NSW have always, and will continue to be integral to the local night time operations as well as a significant contributor to the night time economy. As noted earlier, Taxis play a vital role in providing safe transport to night time patrons, whether it be moving patrons across venues and precincts, to providing safe transport for patrons to their homes or places of residence.

Taxis also contribute to the night time patrons overall experience whether it be patrons dining, or attending various forms of night time entertainment, Taxis will continue to operate, whilst the states transport system is either limited, or not operating during the late evening.

CONCLUSION

The NSW Taxi Council appreciates the time and consideration given to our submission.

We would be happy to provide any further information if required as part of this review process. The NSW Taxi Council is happy to meet with members of the NSW Parliament or NSW Enquiry into the night time economy if required to discuss any aspects of our submission.