



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

RECEIVED

16 FEB 2010

LEGISLATIVE
council

SL10/35

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NSW TAXI INDUSTRY

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Inquiry into the NSW Taxi Industry

To: Adam Johnston

From Mr Ajaka

1. Your submission notes that the subsidy provided by the Taxi Subsidy Scheme 'has a limited value of \$30 per docket, per taxi trip, and it has stayed at this rate for as long as I can remember' (p2, Sub 1). Do you believe that the allocated amount adequately covers the increasing costs of taxi transport?
2. Your submission notes that the existing paper-based voucher system for the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme is cumbersome for many people with disabilities (p 2, Sub 1). Do you think that the introduction of a card-based system would be a positive initiative?

Answers to Questions on Notice

1. No, the voucher does not adequately cover the cost of transport, particularly for those on fixed incomes (eg: pensions) who may also have limited transport options beyond taxis. For example, I am very fortunate to live close to a bus stop serviced by the Forest Coach Lines company; they have several accessible buses on their fleet. My wheelchair is of a size and design which allows me to use the bus – this would not be the case for all wheelchair users.

Where possible, I use this bus service. By way of comparison, a return bus fare from Davidson to the City will cost me \$10.20 round trip. Davidson to the City by taxi (one way) will cost \$40 cash plus docket, one way. However, it should be pointed out that with the taxi, I receive personal door-to-door service, which is much appreciated in poor weather and, at times when buses are unavailable. Equally, when it is late, I would always use a taxi in preference to a bus, in the interests of my safety.

I note that in the 1997 Report *Concessions: Who Benefits*, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family Community Affairs¹ was provided with a Table showing the mismatch of State concessions. From the Table, I now concede an error as to the value; in 1997 it was \$25, today in 2010 it is \$30 (checking my docket book). While uncertain when that change was made, I am certain the rise cannot have kept pace with the CPI or other comparable cost of living measures. The Disability Council, amongst others, have repeatedly raised with government the hardships caused by the level of 'unmet need' in the disability sector.² Again, these can be particularly acute for those on fixed incomes.

I recommend that the value of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme docket be formally pegged to the CPI and be kept as near as possible to 50 percent of the value of the average fare, as assessed by IPART.

2. Yes, I do. The Ministry of Transport ran a trial of such a scheme several years ago, in which I was a participant. Sadly, the so-called pilot program ended, without further action.

Recommendation (a) The Committee should ask the NSW Ministry of Transport what happened to the initiative. Smart card technology was a proposal raised in the House of Representatives report (from 1997) mentioned

¹ Refer to <http://www.aph.gov.au/House/committee/fca/Concard/Chap07.pdf> and go to Table 7.2, page 87

² For example see Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Unmet need for disability services: effectiveness of funding and remaining shortfalls*, available at

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/dis/unds-efrs/> - See also, HREOC, *It's About Time Chapter 8: Government Support: Care for adults and support for carers*, available at http://www.hreoc.gov.au/sex_discrimination/its_about_time/chapter8.html

above.³ I also endorsed the proposal in a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission, during a review of Australia's privacy laws.⁴

However, I remind the Committee that I also said in my submission that smart card technology should operate via a separate device from Cabcharge e-ticket technology, to foster competition and limit Cabcharge's opportunity to strengthen its position.⁵ I reiterate my view that Cabcharge (and the Taxi Council, of which it is the largest member) has clear anticompetitive tendencies. I draw your attention to the NSW Report during the 2005 Australian Taxi Conference (Gold Coast – 8 May – 12 May 2005).⁶ NSW rails against competition policy⁷ and the reform of the WAT program, questioning the program's economic viability.⁸

Smart card technology should also reduce fraud, as an electronic record is produced, and the machines I have seen use GPS technology to determine a taxi's position. This position appears on the receipt the driver gives the passenger at the end of a trip. Such technology simplifies matters for all parties, particularly for passengers with limited hand function (like me) who face challenges completing paper documents.

Recommendation (b) That the Committee support the immediate roll-out of a t-card system for the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme.

Yours faithfully,



Adam Johnston

11 February 2010

³ Refer to Chapter 5 of *Concessions: Who benefits?* available at

<http://www.aph.gov.au/House/committee/fca/Concard/Chap05.pdf>

⁴ See [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/eHealth-002/\\$FILE/002_Adam%20Johnston%20pt%2021-07-09.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/eHealth-002/$FILE/002_Adam%20Johnston%20pt%2021-07-09.pdf) (pp. 6-7)

⁵ Submission 1, p.3

⁶ State Report to the Conference available at http://www.atia.com.au/bw-download.php?f=20060403034216_ATIA_State_Reports_2004_www.pdf

⁷ See *ibid*, p. 3 of 30 (Adobe numbering)

⁸ See *ibid*, p. 4 of 30 (Adobe numbering)