

## **Inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 Reforms**

Carers Victoria Submission, June 2019

*1. Are you a booking service provider or a driver?*

Neither, Carers Victoria supports and advocates for carers and people receiving care who are regular users of commercial passenger vehicles. We experience a significant level of demand for taxi vouchers from carers, usually for transport to medical appointments. More than 700,000 Victorians are an unpaid carer for a family member or friend who is older with care needs, has a disability or has a mental health or other chronic health condition. Carers and the people they care for have specific needs in relation to commercial passenger vehicles and they regularly list access to safe, reliable and affordable transport as being a major problem. Most carers are on limited incomes and the cost of necessary point-to-point transport is a major impost on their household budgets.

*2. What are your thoughts on how the new registration system is functioning?*

Carers Victoria has no practical experience of the new registration system.

*3. What has been the effect on your business, including compliance costs?*

With more commercial passenger vehicles on the road, there should be fewer problems for carers with getting vehicles when needed. From our experience as passengers, the new scheme is working better than the previous system for many users. However, carers do still express concern about the safety of their vulnerable family member or friend travelling alone in commercial passenger vehicles. Carers have reported people with care needs can be more likely to be taken by a longer route and taken advantage of or overcharged in other ways. If a person has a cognitive or communication impairment, they may be unable to identify they have been fraudulently treated, or to report it. Carers are important advocates for people reporting unscrupulous driver behaviour to the regulator.

An additional issue is the multipurpose taxi program (MPTP) is limited to only some types of commercial passenger vehicles. Also, carers are not eligible to use the MPTP unless travelling with the card holder. For example, a carer travelling to collect the person they care for from hospital must pay a full priced fare.

Carers Victoria does not have any compliance costs. Our costs relate to a high level of demand for provision of taxi vouchers to carers, which can only be used in some types of commercial passenger vehicles.

4. *What has been your experience with the regulator the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Commission (previously the Taxi Services Commission)?*

The Commissioner for Disability and Accessibility has been very approachable and is constructively working with social service groups like Carers Victoria through the Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria Disability and Accessibility Forum.

Carers Victoria remains concerned about any move towards removal of the MPTP for NDIS participants, as has happened in other jurisdictions. In our experience the NDIA falls well short of funding the cost of reasonable and necessary transport costs for many NDIS participants.

5. *Do you have any ideas for improving legislation governing the commercial passenger vehicle industry in the future?*

The commercial passenger vehicle industry needs to work with Victorians of all ages and abilities to deliver a safe, quality and affordable service. Relationships such as these can be mutually advantageous into the future.

Carers Victoria would like to see the MPTP cover all types of commercial passenger vehicles. We would also like to see holders of the Victorian Carer Card able to use the MPTP for independent travel in support of the card holder e.g. to collect the card holder or to travel home after delivering the card holder to their destination.

6. *With these changes, have you remained a member of the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry?*

Carers Victoria is not a member of the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry.

7. *Are there any other issues you would like to raise with the Committee?*

Carers Victoria has received complaints of wheelchair accessible commercial passenger vehicles being unavailable. As the National Disability Insurance Scheme does allow some funds for transport for some participants and approximately 100,000 Victorians will be in the Scheme, there may be a market opening for an operator catering to the needs of people with disability and their carers.

More information on carers and care relationships is contained in the Carers Recognition Act 2012.

Carers Victoria would be happy to discuss the needs of Victoria's carers in relation to the commercial passenger industry in person if required.