

## INQUIRY INTO THE MULTI PURPOSE TAXI PROGRAM (MPTP)

### SUBMISSION

From: David D Christensen



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My submission and recommendation for this inquiry is as follows:

#### **1. Focus of Legislation**

The welfare of, benefit to, and safety of the client (i.e. the eligible disabled individual) should be paramount in all respects.

The interests of current and potential service providers should in no circumstances take precedence over the interests of the client.

#### **2. Future Focus, Not Past Focus**

Legislation must be framed in view of the current and future realities of the market. Past arrangements, formulated under a different set of circumstances, must not be treated as a precedent or entitlement for any group.

#### **3. Client Choice**

Subject to certain minimum conditions (noted below), clients should be provided with the same range of choices of service provider and pricing as those available to the general public.

#### **4. Use of Taxpayer Funds**

Where taxpayer funds are used in the provision of any service (including the MPTP) it is incumbent upon the Government to (a) provide fair and equitable access for all service providers (subject to meeting minimum service standards) to participate in such a program, and (b) to allow market forces to drive the most effective pricing outcomes (based on minimum service standards) that will benefit the taxpayer as well as the client/user.

Support of a monopolistic service provider regime (such as the legacy taxi Industry) does not meet these basic requirements

## **5. Consistent Minimum Driver Qualifications**

All drivers who are registered to provide service to the MPTP should be subject to the same level of training, qualification, scrutiny and experience – regardless of which Booking Service Provider (BSP) or provider grouping (taxi, rideshare, hire car) they are aligned with.

This would imply that either (a) CPVV be tasked with the development of and maintenance of a standardized, industry wide training and compliance program, of (b) the training and compliance programs of individual BSP's be subject to approval and ongoing audit by CPVV to ensure consistency.

## **6. Minimum Vehicle Standards**

All vehicles registered to provide service to the MPTP must adhere to minimum standards, and these should be at least as rigorous as those applying to non-disabled passengers, and preferably more stringent considering the greater risk many disabled passengers are subject to. These minimum standards should include

(a) Maximum age of vehicle: Initially no vehicles over 10 years should be eligible for the MPTP, and this should progressively be lowered to a maximum of 6 years over a period of time. There is no excuse for allowing a disabled passenger to be carried by a vehicle over 10 years of age (which based on typical industry mileage may have anything from 600,000 to over 1 million km on its odometer)

(b) Minimum ANCAP safety rating must be 5 star, effective immediately. There is no excuse for allowing disabled passengers to travel in a vehicle that the authorized independent Australian safety rating organization has identified as sub-optimal

## **7. Fair and Equitable Access to Pick-up and Drop-off Locations**

In the interests of passenger safety and equity, 'taxi stands' must be made available to all types of BSP's when picking up or dropping off a passenger as part of the MPTP

## **8. Rod Barton Free Zone**

Masquerading under the banner of 'Transport Matters', State Member of Parliament Rod Barton unashamedly represents the legacy (monopoly) taxi industry, and cannot be relied upon to provide a fair and impartial perspective on the MPTP issue.

Mr Barton's prejudice toward and commitment to the legacy taxi industry is plain.

He has described the 2017 deregulation of the industry (to allow rideshare operations in Victoria) as 'a disaster' – in contradiction to the millions of Victorians who now freely choose rideshare options over the former taxi monopoly.

He is a prime mover in the class action by the former monopolistic taxi industry against Uber, and a frequent and vocal critic of Uber and the rideshare industry, with the clear desire to return to the 'good old days' of a taxi monopoly.

He has already declared in press releases his objection to the deregulation of the MPTP and has (without any evidence) levelled criticism at the CPVV for an inadequate trial program of the MPTP with Uber in Geelong.

Rod Barton is simply an embittered throwback to the taxi mafia of the past that has lost its monopoly; he has demonstrated an unwillingness to embrace either market sentiment or future trends; and simply any views he may propound need to be treated as highly prejudiced, handled with extreme caution, and in most cases ignored in the same way as a Blockbuster video store owner should be treated when he or she curses and seeks to ban Netflix.