

Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program

Dr Daniel Davis

Organisation Name: Link Community Transport

Your position or role: Chair

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

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Danny Davis

Parliament of Victoria
Legislative Council
Economy And Infrastructure Committee
Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP)

4 August 2021

Dear Committee Members,

We applaud the Victorian Government's renewed focus on the needs of Victoria's vulnerable, mobility impaired and transport disadvantaged communities.

We provide this submission to assist the inquiry to be aware of, and take into account the following points, as they consider the future of government's investment in the MPTP program, the effective use of public funds, and the moral and treaty obligations for equitable access to services and community.

1. Public Safety and Risk

We observe heightened public and political demand for an increase in quality managed services given the proximity of findings from The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

In the face of these exposures of cross-system abuse, we observe the huge commitment to, and investment in, accreditation, training, quality systems and standards that has been made by aged and disability providers, by their assisted mobility services and by the community transport sector as a whole.

Further, we observe the increasing understanding of assisted mobility and assisted access to services and community as a vital early intervention component of community care. Done well, it is an integrated component of wellbeing and early identification of issues that leads to a material reduction of avoidable admissions.

We invite the Inquiry to consider whether the taxi industry ownership and governance, and its highly mobile workforce are appropriately equipped to meet these increased community expectations, the higher-bar of health and disability quality standards, or to protect the community from exploitation and other risks.

We observe that there is considerable (unmitigated) public and political exposure arising from a policy that positions the MPTP as a foundation of an equitable transport service.

Whilst we recognize that the Taxi industry has had to absorb major change from technology disruption, COVID-19 and changing tourist/immigration patterns, the MPTP should not be considered a substitute for historical underinvestment in Victorian community infrastructure.

And finally, whilst important, the regulation of safety requirements for vehicles and the other issues identified in the inquiry's terms of reference, are not sufficient to address the material risks identified by Royal Commission investigations.

2. Public Transport Efficiency and Equity of Access

We observe that wheelchair accessible Taxis are an appropriate service for only a small segment of Victoria's overall Assisted Mobility requirements.

We invite the Inquiry to consider whether investment of public funds in an effort to extend this mode of service delivery, without reference to the broader user-directed demand, or a systemic solution is a) an effective use of resources, and/or b) risks increasing fragmentation of service availability and accessibility for end users.

We recommend that State and Commonwealth public funding is prioritised to a public-infrastructure approach as the most effective means of meeting the broad universe of assisted mobility need in the community.

We suggest that a considered strategic approach that best supports the assisted mobility needs and safety of our community is particularly important where we observe that effective integrated community transport systems in Australian States other than Victoria are far better funded on a per capita basis than those operating in Victoria.

We recommend that government policy forms an approach that aligns health outcomes, training and accreditation, service quality management, governance standards, investment in service responsive to demand, geographic coverage, service reliability, quality control, and reduced carbon footprint, in order to ensure the best possible service to Victoria's vulnerable communities.

We remain available to work with the inquiry to explore and define these issues, and identify effective solutions that exist in Victoria and other states.

We would also be happy to assist the inquiry access the range of evidence based research produced in Australia and around the world that supports system-design approaches to these community need issues.

Please let us know how we can be of further assistance.

Many thanks. Yours,

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