



COTA QUEENSLAND

PO Box 15525
City East 4002
ABN 13 465 280 311

Level 1, 25 Mary St
Brisbane QLD 4000
www.cotaqld.org.au

P:(07) 3316 2999
P: 1300 738 348
F:(07) 3316 2900

3 January 2013

Mr Neil Scales
Acting Director-General
Taxi Subsidy Scheme Review Panel (Chair)
Department of Transport and Main Roads
Attention: sandie.m.benson@tmr.qld.gov.au

Dear Neil

Thank you for the opportunity to shape the future of the Queensland Government Taxi Subsidy Scheme. The Scheme is one of the most important and valued contributions which the Department of Transport and Main Roads makes to the inclusion of people who face mobility challenges. I also appreciate the detailed information which the department has provided about the cost, membership, use and administration of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. This level of analysis sets a high standard of transparency which other government programs could emulate.

COTA Queensland has identified some key themes from its discussions with COTA members, as well as with stakeholders in the community transport and Home and Community Care (HACC) sectors. The recurring message we received is that the sustainability of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme can be enhanced by increasing the range of accessible transport options for people who face mobility challenges.

In response to the Review Panel's terms of reference, COTA Queensland recommends the Queensland Government:

- (1) Maintain the current eligibility criteria and entitlements for existing Taxi Subsidy Scheme members;
- (2) Introduce an additional eligibility criteria for future users of the Scheme (to commence from 1 January 2014) whereby applicants for cards (excluding renewals) must also hold either a Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card issued by the Commonwealth Government;
- (3) Work with local governments and the Queensland Community Transport Industry Association to develop the Taxi Subsidy Scheme into a 'Transport Subsidy Scheme', drawing upon a range of providers, including not for profit agencies, to provide transport for people with mobility challenges.

Increasing the availability of accessible transport options can reduce the demand on the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. We commend the work of the TransitCare Mobility Management Centre, in this regard, which is

using centralised scheduling software to pool its transport resources and connect isolated households with public transport services. I have attached their comments for your consideration.

We also believe that efficiencies can be obtained by coordinating the assessment of Queensland Government transport-related schemes. For example, a number of programs require applications to be confirmed by medical practitioners or health advisors. Examples include: Taxi Subsidy Scheme; Translink passes (e.g. Companion Card, TransLink Access Pass, Vision Impairment Travel Pass); Disability Parking Permit Scheme; Registration of Motorised Wheelchairs; and the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme.

Confirmation of eligibility for these schemes could be centralised rather than having applicants re-confirm their disability, age, or long-term medical condition. Quite apart from the benefits for a person not having to visit medical practitioners frequently, coordination of the assessment for these programs would potentially reduce government expenditure.

We are also mindful of older drivers in Queensland who have to maintain medical certification from age 75. It is vital that older people have mobility options, such as access to the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, to maintain social participation once they relinquish their driver licence.

Finally I hope the department can facilitate an age-friendly taxi industry which is part of a transport system that is:

- integrated and coordinated
- flexible and able to respond to the diverse needs of an ageing population
- safe and secure
- efficient and reliable
- equitable, accessible and socially inclusive
- environmentally sensitive
- affordable and providing value for money
- supports economic growth.

If you would like further information about the COTA Queensland's views on mobility for people as they age, please don't hesitate to contact me on telephone 3316 2999.

Yours sincerely



Mark Tucker-Evans
Chief Executive