



Purple Orange

# SA running late on fixing Access Taxi shortage

Many people living with disability **rely on Access Taxis** to attend essential appointments, work, education, and other ordinary activities of daily life. Without accessible transport, **people are cut off from vital services**, such as healthcare, and become **increasingly isolated** from their communities.

In South Australia, the unreliability of Access Taxi services has been impacting on the lives of people living with disability for many years and the problem is continuing to get worse. In its most recent Annual Report, the Department of Infrastructure and Transport acknowledged that Access Taxi passengers, including many who had pre-booked in advance, waited more than 30 minutes for late pick-ups on 5,100 occasions during the last financial year – that is, **an average of 14 people experienced a very late service each day**. In addition, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Corey Wingard, has stated that **a significant number of bookings are declined by operators** each year.

There are currently 101 Access Taxi licences in South Australia, an increase of just one during the past 10 years. Despite the **lack of transparency** regarding real-time service availability, it is understood that many Access Taxi licences are either not in operation at all, or the vehicles are only on the road for limited periods of time due to a shortage of drivers. During peak demand periods, such as school pick up and drop off, it can be **extremely difficult** for other customers **to access a timely service**.

Currently, Suburban Taxis manages the Centralised Booking Service (CBS) for Access Taxis in South Australia under a monopoly contract with the state government. This **prevents competition for bookings between taxi operators**. It is also a contributing factor in neither Uber Assist nor Uber WAV services being available in South Australia.

JFA Purple Orange believes that it is well overdue for South Australia to **transition the state's taxi fleet to fully accessible vehicles** to ensure that taxi services are **available on an equal basis to everyone** in our community and accessible services are offered within a competitive market. This approach can also give the state **a significant competitive advantage** in the tourism market,

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JFA Purple Orange is an independent social-profit organisation that undertakes systemic policy analysis and advocacy across a range of issues affecting people living with disability and their families.

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guarantee that **the transport needs of our ageing population are met**, and be flexible enough to **evolve as new greener vehicle options** become available in the future.

London is a world leader in providing accessible transport options for residents and visitors. It set a deadline of 2020 for all taxis to be wheelchair accessible and is now reaping the **social, economic, and reputational benefits** of its transition.

Based on a grant scheme currently offered to some taxi licence holders by the Queensland Government, JFA Purple Orange has modelled the **full transition to accessible vehicles** in South Australia at a total cost of **less than \$70 million over 10 years** – that is, **less than \$7 million per year**.

The scheme would provide a **50 per cent co-contribution** to licence holders for the purchase of a **new fully accessible vehicle and fittings** to replace an existing ageing taxi. With about 140 grants of up to \$45,000<sup>1</sup> (based on a cost per vehicle of up to \$90,000) available each year, **a fully accessible taxi fleet of 1400 vehicles could be achieved in South Australia by 2032**.

Since 1 May 2017, taxi and ride-sourcing service passengers have paid a **\$1 Point to Point Transport Service Transaction Levy** on all journeys beginning in the metropolitan area. The levy was legislated as part of arrangements to legalise Uber and justified as providing the revenue required to fund one-off Taxi Industry Assistance Payments. When the levy was announced in 2016, the Weatherill Government indicated it would **raise \$80 million over the first 10 years**, however recent journey data provided by the Department suggests this amount significantly underestimated the revenue.

The 2016 Taxi and Chauffeur Vehicle Industry Review report, which recommended the levy, stated that all revenue should be allocated to an industry fund that would **invest in future development** of the sector. The revenue raised has already surpassed that required to recoup the \$32 million spent on assistance payments with **no new initiatives of comparable dimensions** announced for this **ongoing revenue stream of at least \$8 million, and possibly as much as \$12 million, per year**.

This revenue can **underpin the investment required to transform South Australia's taxi fleet by supporting the purchase of fully accessible vehicles and creating a world-leading, high-quality transport service that meets the needs of all South Australians and visitors**.

In the lead up to the state election, **JFA Purple Orange is calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to:**

- a 10-year **co-contribution grant scheme** to achieve a **fully accessible taxi fleet by 2032**<sup>2</sup>
- additional **education, training, and awareness initiatives** for all on-demand passenger transport drivers to improve customer service experiences and help end discrimination
- **one set of regulations** that apply to all on-demand passenger transport operators and drivers to **enhance safety and amenity** of vehicles and services across the sector
- new **transparency measures** during the transition phase to allow Access Taxi users to view **real-time service availability information**, such as the number of vehicles operating and the number of people waiting for a service

<sup>1</sup> Indexed for inflation over the life of a grant scheme.

<sup>2</sup> More information about the modelling to underpin this proposed scheme is available on request.

- **investing revenue** obtained from the Point to Point Transport Service Transaction Levy **to underpin these outcomes**, and publicly releasing details about the levy's revenue and expenditure each year to ensure that **the levy is being used for its purpose** rather than other general government expenditure

**For further information, please contact Robbi Williams, CEO of JFA Purple Orange, on (08) 8373 8333 or [robbiw@purpleorange.org.au](mailto:robbiw@purpleorange.org.au).**

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