

Taxi Industry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting 6 – 16 December 2010

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Participants

Status	Name	Organisation
Present	Mustafa Ally	Assistant Secretary, Ethnic Community Council of Queensland
	Greg Collins	Taxi Operator
	Blair Davies	Chief Operating Officer, Taxi Council of Queensland
	Layne Gardiner	Director Black and White Taxis Cairns
	Ross Mutton	Queensland Taxi Advisors Inc.
	Bill Parker	General Manager, Yellow Cabs
	Adam Cole	Independent taxi driver
	Lee Sims	Secretary, Cab Drivers Association of Queensland
	Paul Larcombe	Chair, Disability Council of Queensland
	Ryan Huelin	Chair, Department of Transport and Main Roads
	Rose Kent	Department of Transport and Main Roads
	Lee Baker	Department of Transport and Main Roads
	Linda Wilson	Department of Transport and Main Roads (minute taker)
Apologies	Janine Girvan	Department of Transport and Main Roads
	Max McBride	Director, Capricorn Coast Taxis
	Amanda Rigby	Organiser, Transport Workers Union

1. Welcome and introductions

Members were welcomed to the meeting by the committee's Chair, Ryan Huelin.

Linda Wilson from TMR was introduced to the committee. Linda will provide secretariat services to the Committee for the next 12 months.

2. Agenda Review

Ryan Huelin reviewed the agenda and explained the format of the meeting. Members approved the agenda and were supportive of the format.

There were no actions outstanding from the previous meeting.

4. Confirmation of minutes and actions

Ryan Huelin asked members if the minutes from the previous TIAC meeting of 15 September 2010 were a true and accurate record of the meeting. Adam Cole requested an amendment to the minutes as he was present at the meeting but not recorded as such.

Ryan confirmed the amendment would be made. The minutes were endorsed as amended by TIAC members.

The committee was advised that Ross Mutton has replaced John Rahilly as the Queensland Taxi Advisors Incorporated (QTAI) representative on the TIAC.

ACTION:	Amend 15 September meeting minutes and circulate with 16 December 2010 minutes.	Linda Wilson
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5. Queensland Taxi Strategic Plan 2010-2015 and Queensland Government Response to Ombudsman's Report

Ryan Huelin provided members with an overview of the *Queensland Taxi Strategic Plan 2010-2015* and advised that Rose Kent would give an overview on the status of actions in the plan.

Rose Kent reported to the committee that the *Queensland Taxi Strategic Plan 2010-2015* was approved by Cabinet on 15 November 2010, tabled in Parliament on 25 November 2010 and is available on the TMR website. Rose noted that now the plan had government sign-off, TMR intended to progress implementation of the actions as tabled in the priorities and timings spreadsheet that had been distributed to members.

The committee had a general discussion about the actions in the plan. Ross Mutton voiced his concern about the English language assessment that all new applicants for taxi driver authorisation must undertake. He stated it already costs between five to six hundred dollars to complete taxi driver training and obtain taxi driver authorisation, and potential drivers could not afford the additional cost of the English assessment.

Ross noted that the assessment is more stringent than the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) English language skills standard and tabled a copy of the MBA standard. He suggested that the MBA accepts if a person's last two years of education is in an English speaking country and questioned why the TMR assessment is more stringent than the MBA standard. He also claimed that if a person has an English speaking background, the TMR English language assessment is unwarranted.

Rose Kent advised members that the new English assessment tests an applicant's English language proficiency against the National Minimum English Standard for taxi drivers to determine an applicant's proficiency in the five skill areas of writing, reading, speaking, listening and numeracy. To date, 109 assessments have been taken. Sixteen applicants have been unsuccessful and some of these unsuccessful applicants come from an English speaking background. TMR had explored options with the Department of Education and Training to fund the assessment process but no funding could be allocated. The fee of \$90 for the test is the cheapest in Australia.

Lee Sims, a representative of the Cab Drivers Association of Queensland (CDAQ) stated he understood the intent of the English assessment is for people from overseas applying to become a taxi driver, but questioned why the industry should be teaching English to potential drivers.

Rose Kent stated that it is has never been intended that the industry would teach English to potential drivers and that the assessment is a test, not training. It is a test to check if an applicant for taxi driver authorisation already has the literacy and numeracy skills required to competently fulfil the role of a taxi driver. Rose further advised that TMR will undertake a 12 month review of the English assessment and will consider feedback and industry concerns during the review process.

Paul Larcombe noted that discussion was held at a national level with agreement in 2009 for each jurisdiction to implement a NMES for all new applicants of taxi driver authorisation. Australian Transport Council endorsed the standard in April 2010.

Blair Davies noted that the new English assessment arrangements commenced in Queensland in November 2010 and members should let it run its course. TMR will review it in 12 months and members' concerns can be addressed in the review process.

Lee Sims reiterated his concern over the high cost of getting driver authorisation and he claimed the taxi driver training provided by taxi booking companies is incompetently delivered.

Further discussion followed in response to these comments. Blair Davies noted that as TIAC members, all have opinions, but individuals should not be criticised by other members.

Lee Simms left the meeting at 1.30pm, expressing his dissatisfaction with the Committee, the strategic plan and the Government's response to the Ombudsman's Report. He advised that he no longer wished to be a member of the Committee and would seek to have his concerns addressed through other mechanisms.

ACTION:	Write to CDAQ to confirm continued membership of TIAC	Linda Wilson
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Committee members continued the discussion. Bill Parker noted that Queensland has high standards in training taxi drivers and he advised that he believed that the \$90 English assessment fee was excessive. He advised that Yellow Cabs has incorporated the fee into the training cost. Bill stated that Yellow Cabs have a very good taxi driver training course which is provided in-house by qualified staff, but the overall cost to complete the course is a deterrent as people cannot afford it.

Paul Larcombe advised the committee that the English assessment is not about spelling. Paul stated that numeracy and literacy are essential skills that people must have. Paul further stated that it is not safe for people with disabilities to travel in taxis, if their taxi driver cannot communicate with them.

Ryan Huelin concluded the discussion noting that industry concerns will be considered during the English assessment review process.

The committee discussed taxi security cameras and downloading of images. There is legislation in place to ensure taxi operators and drivers do not operate a taxi for hire with a faulty taxi security camera system, unless the taxi operator has given written notice to TMR about the faulty taxi security camera, and the driver carries a copy of this notice. It was noted that the downtime of faulty taxi security cameras is generally three days, but that on occasions, the downtime has been five weeks, which appears to be excessive for repairs to be completed.

The committee discussed the current review of Queensland's taxis security camera system. Rose Kent provided TIAC members with an overview of the review advising one round of consultation had occurred and wider consultation will take place through the release of a discussion paper on the TMR website. It is anticipated the discussion paper will be released in early 2011 for industry comment.

The committee discussed the standard of Queensland's taxi security camera system against similar systems implemented nationally and internationally. Bill Parker commented on the desire for a system that feeds back to a central server. He noted that the quality of picture is good but there are seconds between images and the camera may not capture some incidents as a result. There was general consensus by TIAC members that other security camera suppliers should be encouraged to enter the Queensland market, small changes should be made to legislation and the specifications should be updated to include audio and longer recording time.

In closing this session, Ryan Huelin noted that the review has provided TMR with opportunities to look at enhancements to the current system. Ryan encouraged committee members to provide feedback on the discussion paper when it is released.

6. Queensland Taxi Strategic Plan 2010-2015

Ryan Huelin advised committee members that the division had been allocated funding for six additional staff to assist in the implementation of the actions in the plan. Ryan noted that TMR will need to seek extra funding to complete all the actions under the plan.

Rose Kent presented TIAC members with a comprehensive overview of the plan's priority actions and proposed timings for implementation (attached). Rose reported that work on the majority of actions was planned for the next two years in line with the funding allocation.

Committee members engaged in general discussion on a number of the actions in the plan.

Some committee members expressed concern over the imminent publication of taxi licence owner information stating that it was an invasion of privacy and may have ramifications for industry members. Ryan Huelin reported that the Information Commissioner requested that the register be set up to ensure a more accountable, transparent system and Crown Law advice has been received in regard to privacy concerns. Ryan advised members that the letter sent to taxi and limousine service licence holders is seeking industry feedback on the register.

TIAC members had a general discussion on implementation of the Model Taxi Bailment Agreement (MTBA) and associated legislation amendments. Rose reported that the MTBA is a model agreement and while there is no requirement for it to be used, operators and drivers will need to know that they will meet the requirements of the legislation if they do use it correctly.

8. General business

Ryan asked members if they had any general business. In summary, the following issues were raised and discussed:

- Industry concerns of QPS issuing taxi drivers with notices to take their taxi to a nominated location for inspection, without valid reason. TMR advised that this issue had been raised with Transport Services Division who will take the matter up with QPS.
- Concerns about the impact of rising costs of compulsory third party (CTP) insurance for taxis. TMR has provided written advice to Minister on this issue.
- Ethnic Community Council of Queensland has established an Ethnic Advisory Committee (EAC) which meets quarterly, TMR is happy to give presentation to EAC, if requested.
- TIAC to continue, two meetings a year March and September. TIAC members happy to have membership renewed.
- New forums will be used to complement the existing forums to broaden communication with industry stakeholders. These forums are detailed at the end of the strategic plan and include mechanisms for TMR to obtain feedback from stakeholders in regional Queensland.

9. Close

Ryan Huelin closed the meeting by thanking TIAC members for their contributions and support during 2010. Ryan wished committee members a happy Christmas and New Year and looked forward to continuing to work with industry to implement the strategic plan's actions during 2011.