



Our ref: 23-002249

David Mason  
Director Disability Rights Policy  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission  
GPO Box 5218, Sydney 2001

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Dear Mr Mason,

I am writing in relation to an application from the Taxi Council of Western Australia seeking an exemption from the operation of Part 1.2 of Schedule 1 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Transport 2002 and from the operation of section 24 of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Part 1.2 of Schedule 1 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Transport provides that response times for multi-purpose taxis (which are wheelchair accessible) are to be the same as for ordinary taxis and places responsibility for this requirement on taxi radio networks and co-operatives.

As the Minister with portfolio responsibility for seniors and carers, I am aware that there is a significant number of older people with mobility and vision impairments who are not capable of driving themselves, or whose disabilities are so severe that they are unable to use public transport and as such are reliant on multi-purpose taxis to meet their transport needs.

Furthermore, there are also many unpaid carers look after people with disabilities and mobility impairments. While some carers possess special vehicles with hoists and higher roofs which enable the transport of people with wheelchairs, these devices can be extremely expensive and difficult to retrofit. As such, many carers are reliant on using multi-purpose taxis to transport a disabled person to an event. Access to these taxis often gives the carer some much needed respite, and affords the person with a disability a level of independence and enables them to get out of the house and attend social outings. Social isolation is an enormous problem for many disabled and elderly people.

The Carers Advisory Council have informed me of the difficulty that Carers and disabled people currently experience in securing multi-purpose taxis within a reasonable time frame. If this exemption sought by the Taxi Council is granted, it will most likely result in even longer waiting periods for disabled people, providing yet another disincentive for disabled people to attend events outside of their home and contributing further to higher rates of social isolation and depression experienced by seniors, carers and disabled people compared with the general population.

As you are no doubt aware, our population is ageing rapidly. In 2006, seniors aged 60 years and over comprised 16% of Western Australia's population. By 2031, seniors will comprise more than a quarter (28%) of the State's population. Accordingly, the demand for multi-purpose taxis is likely to grow considerably as physical mobility tends to decline with the ageing process. If the exemption currently sought by the Taxi Council were to be granted, it will have a substantial affect on a large percentage of the population in Western Australia with a disability, and also have considerable impact on those people who care for those with disabilities.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could keep me informed of any developments in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely



SUE ELLERY MLC  
**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; COMMUNITIES;  
WOMEN'S INTERESTS; SENIORS AND VOLUNTEERING**

CC: Sheila McHale MLA Minister for Disabilities;

Alannah MacTiernan MLA, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure