



inclusionmelbourne

people creating better lives

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Essential Services Commission
Level 37 / 2 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

25 October 2013

Re: Taxi Fare review 2013-14

Dear Commissioners,

We thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the review of taxi fares for 2013-14.

About Inclusion Melbourne

Inclusion Melbourne is a not-for-profit organisation that provides services to people with an intellectual disability, helping them to create more enjoyable and rewarding lives and participate fully in the community.

Our vision at Inclusion Melbourne is for people with an intellectual disability to live in an inclusive community, where everyone has the same opportunities to participate in community life and to take their place in society as respected citizens. Thus, individual programs are tailored to the needs, wants, wishes and desires of each person, with a strong focus on discovering what it is that they would like to do with their lives.

We believe our role as a disability support provider, is to encourage and enable people with disabilities to achieve and maintain a valued quality of life. We achieve this by supporting people to create highly individualised and flexible lifestyles based on their needs and desires. To achieve this we encourage people to participate in activities and develop relationships with people within their local community. The law and the inalienable rights we have as citizens are not diluted based on our cognitive ability and thus Inclusion Melbourne are serving a valuable purpose in the community.

Our response

Disability Support Providers are heavily reliant on the taxi industry for the provision of transport to the people we work with. We are indebted to the many wonderful drivers who assist us each day to enable us to do our work and provide a wide range of supports to people with a disability.

Through the Victorian State Disability Plan, services for people with a disability are becoming highly personalised. This is coupled with a push for more inclusive communities. This is resulting in disability support providers reducing their transport fleets as these no longer meet the needs of the providers nor the people being supported. We support these strategic directions and initiatives. However, the Department of Human Services regulations require that providers of day services to adults with intellectual disability are responsible for the coordination of transport for the people they support.

The directions of the State Disability Plan encourage the adoption of taxis as the preferred method of public transportation for people – they are unscheduled and can

easily access any location within the community whereas other modes of public transport follow specific routes, typically along main thoroughfares and not into the hearts of smaller communities.

Further, for people who lack the cognitive ability to purchase a ticket or lack the skills to travel safely, taxis are the only public transportation option available.

We are therefore alarmed by any call from within the taxi industry to introduce a minimum floor price for a short trip. Inclusion Melbourne processes over \$100,000 of taxi fares each year in supporting people, and the majority of these trips are for short distances within metropolitan Melbourne. The majority of these trips are for less than twenty dollars, and some for less than ten dollars. These fees are then passed onto the individual, who is in receipt of a disability support pension, of which seventy five percent is consumed in board and lodging within specialist group home, or up to ninety percent within a supported residential service (rooming house). These people have no capacity to pay for increases in taxi fares beyond the CPI increases they receive in their pensions. As it stands, many of these people are reliant on friends, family and donations to provide for their clothing and pharmaceutical requirements.

As a result we believe that the Essential Services Commission should discount any calls for establishing a floor price for taxi fares, or if this is concerned, have time based restrictions so that they do not negatively impact on the lives of Victorians with a disability.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Leighton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel Leighton
Chief Executive Officer