



DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE (INC.)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Impacts of Taxi Deregulation on People with Disabilities

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The Disability Resources Centre (DRC) is a member-driven organisation that is managed and staffed by people with disabilities. We promote the rights of people with disabilities through individual and systemic advocacy. We are currently conducting a project investigating the issues faced by Victorians with disabilities utilising transport services.

The DRC is concerned with legislation introduced in Victorian Parliament today which, if passed, would substantially deregulate taxi services and particularly taxi pricing.

Due to lack of accessible public transport and personal transport options, many people with disabilities rely on taxis as their only means to access work, social engagements and civic duties. Most require taxi services to complement their public transport use.

The use of an app to book fares and shop for prices will be a barrier for some people with disabilities, particularly those who have difficulty communicating or using relevant technologies. Without access to the app, there is no clear indication of how these taxi users can “shop around”. Realistically, many taxi users with disabilities will be forced to accept whatever price is quoted by the driver. This allows room for discrimination and exploitation of vulnerable taxi users.

The DRC is also concerned that the changes will enable or incentivise drivers to choose what they perceive as the “easiest” fares, meaning people with disabilities will be left behind. Refusal of short fares could mean that people who rely on taxis to access local services or to complement their public transport use will be excluded. These are already known issues for taxi users with disabilities.

We are also aware that the legislation purports to penalise surge pricing. We wish to note that surge pricing disproportionately affects people with disabilities, given that the average income of Australians with disabilities is less than half that of non-disabled Australians. In addition, surge pricing often peaks during social, sporting and community events, meaning that people with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from participation in community life when surge transport pricing is permitted.

Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan has indicated that if passengers are not happy with a fare estimate under the changes, they can choose to refuse to use the service. This clearly indicates that the reliance of people with disabilities on taxi services has been overlooked in the development of this legislation.

The Victorian Government should implement protections that promote taxi availability (including accessible taxis) and affordability. People with disabilities should be central to the development of this legislation, not an afterthought. We look forward to reading the legislation as presented.

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