

MULTIPURPOSE TAXI SERVICES

614. Hon KEN BASTON to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

I refer to page 757 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, regarding multipurpose taxi services.

- (1) Given the promised service improvement for the metropolitan area, what steps are being taken to improve regional services?
- (2) What process and data does the department use to assess supply and demand for regional services?
- (3) What establishment and operational subsidies are available to operators in the metropolitan area; and
 - (a) do these differ from subsidies available to operators in regional Western Australia; and
 - (b) if yes, what is the difference and what is the reason for the difference?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. As the member is aware, I met with the taxidriviers in Broome. I also met Hon Ken Baston while I was in Broome. It is not surprising that this question has been asked. I thank the member for his interest in this matter.

- (1) The government is currently drafting a new country taxi bill to make taxi regulations in the regions comparable with those in the metropolitan area. A key aim of this bill will be to make similar arrangements and subsidies available to regional operators. One of the problems is that currently we have a metropolitan taxi act that provides for the establishment of a fund for the purposes of funding some of these special provisions. Unfortunately, a country taxi act is not in place. We have been given approval to draft a country taxi bill, and that is in train.
- (2) The Department of Planning and Infrastructure reviews population data trends and related demand for taxis on a regular three-yearly basis. This process involves interviews with the local taxi companies, councils, the Chamber of Commerce, police, hospitals and other relevant groups and individuals. In the case of a town that has more than six taxis, an independent consultant also undertakes a customer satisfaction survey.
- (3)(a)-(b) Subsidies available include a \$15 000 payment to modify vehicles to allow wheelchair access. In addition, lifting fees of \$7 and \$10 per trip are available for eligible wheelchair-bound clients. Multipurpose taxi owners also pay a reduced rate to lease their taxi licence plates of \$100 per week rather than the regular \$250 a week. It is not possible to directly extend the metropolitan subsidies to the regions at this time because money for these comes directly from the metropolitan taxi industry and is administered from the statutory taxi industry development account.