

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics:

Ride Sharing and Taxi Safety

1. **Since the introduction of ride sharing services in the Territory in February 2018, how have the numbers of taxis in operation in the Territory changed?**

Ridesharing services are operating in Darwin and Alice Springs. Taxi numbers have remained relatively consistent.

| Region | Registered Taxi Numbers | | Registered Rideshare Numbers | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|
| | Nov 2017 | Nov 2019 | Nov 2017 | Nov 2019 |
| Darwin (taxi cap = 154) | 152 | 153 | 0 | 540 |
| Alice Springs (taxi cap = 36) | 36 | 34 | 0 | 7 |
| Katherine | 27 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Tennant Creek | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nhulunbuy | 7 | 19 | 0 | 0 |

Note:

- Registration numbers are based on the residential address of the vehicle owner.
- Rideshare vehicles are not limited to a specific area and can operate anywhere in the Northern Territory.
- The numbers of registered taxis can fluctuate in each region due to operators taking annual leave, seasonal passenger demand variations and vehicles being unserviceable e.g. repair/replacement. Outside of Darwin and Alice Springs taxi numbers are not capped and operators are free to vary fleet sizes to meet passenger demand.
- In Alice Springs, two taxi licences were cancelled and reallocated on 28 November 2019. The vehicles are not yet operational and therefore not reflected in the November 2019 figures.
- In Nhulunbuy, several minibus licences were converted to taxi licences which has increased numbers in recent years.

2. How have reported assaults on taxis drivers fared i.e. increased or decreased, since the introduction of ride sharing?

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics does not have access to this data.

3. How often does the Department do audits on taxi driver safety?

Government requires all taxis to be fitted with approved security camera systems. The camera systems assist with deterring crime in taxis, and must capture images of every person seated in a taxi.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics has two dedicated commercial passenger vehicle (CPV) inspectors based in Darwin who conduct regular audits of taxis and their drivers, which includes audits of security camera systems to ensure correct operation.

Additionally, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics conducts regular audits of taxis to ensure vehicle safety and each taxi is required to have a roadworthy inspection every 12 months. Transport Inspectors also conduct random vehicle safety inspections in the regions.

4. What actions is the Government taking to guarantee the safety and security of all taxi drivers working on Territory roads?

It is a criminal offence to assault a taxi driver. Police investigate alleged assaults and if charged and convicted, perpetrators can face a maximum prison sentence of seven years.

The Department Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics has recently commenced the Respect Your Driver campaign designed to educate the public on the community's expectations relating to behavior in a taxi. This follows on from a similar campaign recently undertaken with the public bus operators.

Under work health and safety law, taxi operators must provide a safe working environment for drivers. This can include fitment of driver security screens and duress alarms, which notify the taxi network when the driver is experiencing a safety issue. Work health and safety law is administered by NT Worksafe, and includes auditing of risk mitigations implemented by taxi operators.