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**Fact Sheet on Taxi Subsidy Schemes**

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**Background**

As Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) has noted in our submission to the Review of the Disability Standards in Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) [link to submission], public transport poses many accessibility challenges for people with disability, especially people who are blind or vision impaired.

Each state and territory government has its own taxi subsidy scheme to aid the transportation of people with disability. Qualification criteria and the conditions of use vary considerably across Australia, as noted below.

**New South Wales**

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (**TTSS**) supports NSW residents who are unable to use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability. If eligible, you could receive a subsidy of 50 per cent of a taxi fare, up to a maximum subsidy of $60 and only pay the remaining fare. Participation in TTSS is not means tested.[[1]](#endnote-1)

To apply for the TTSS, you must:

* Be a permanent resident of Australia;
* Normally reside in NSW;
* Not be a member of a similar scheme in another Australian state or territory;
* Be over school age (preschool-aged children, regardless of disability, are not eligible); and
* Have a severe and permanent disability in one of the following categories:
* Ambulatory, mobility or functional.
* Vision impairment.
* Epilepsy.
* Intellectual disability (cognitive impairment).
* Speech and/or hearing.

**Victoria**

The Multi Purpose Taxi Program supports people with limited mobility by offering subsidised taxi fares. It pays half the cost of each taxi trip taken by its users, up to $60.[[2]](#endnote-2)

To be eligible, applicants must:

* Be a permanent resident of Australia and live in Victoria; and
* Have a severe disability that prevents you from safely and independently using public transport; a permanent disability; or a disability that is not likely to improve with treatment.

You must also be able to demonstrate financial hardship by supplying a Notice of Assessment from the last financial year or hold one of the following:

* A Centrelink issued concession card (such as the Aged Pension or Disability Support Pension); or
* A Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) card (e.g., Gold Repatriation Health card) or an EDA (Extreme Disablement Adjustment) or TPI (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) notation.

**Passengers who require the use of a wheelchair are permanently exempt from the financial hardship test.**

**Queensland**

The Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) pays half the value of a member's taxi fare, up to a maximum fare of $60. There is no limit on the number of taxi journeys a member may take to attract the subsidy. The subsidy is paid to taxi drivers – members have no additional costs.[[3]](#endnote-3)

TSS membership lasts for a maximum of 5 years. To extend your membership, you must reapply before the expiry date. If you have a temporary disability, 6-to-12-month memberships are available.

The Queensland Government has confirmed that eligible National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants can continue to access the TSS until appropriate transport support arrangements are in place, up to 31 October 2025.

To be eligible for the TSS, you must be a permanent resident of Queensland and fully meet at least 1 of the 6 eligibility criteria listed below:

* Physical disability requiring dependence on a wheelchair for all mobility outside the home.
* Severe ambulatory problem that cannot functionally be improved and restricts walking to an extremely limited distance.
* Total loss of vision or severe visual impairment (both eyes).
* Severe and uncontrollable epilepsy with seizures involving loss of consciousness.
* Intellectual impairment or dementia resulting in the need to be accompanied by another person at all times for travel on public transport.
* Severe emotional and/or behaviour disorders with a level of disorganisation resulting in the need to be accompanied by another person at all times for travel on public transport.

Queensland also has a Lift Payment of $20 (inclusive of GST) for each eligible Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) trip involving transportation of a TSS member who is required to travel in a wheelchair. The Lift Payment is not part of the taxi fare so there is no additional cost to a TSS member.

Journeys eligible for the Lift Payment must meet each of the following requirements:

* The passenger must be a TSS member identified as requiring a wheelchair to travel.
* The vehicle must be a designated [WAT](https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/out-and-about/subsidies-concessions-passes/taxi-subsidy#wat).
* The trip must be logged into a taxi company booking system.
* Quoted and fixed fares are acceptable as long as they run through the taximeter.

The process used to administer the Lift Payment is the same process used to administer TSS payments – i.e., Lift Payments either go to a taxi booking company for delivery to the operator, or directly to the operator. Operators then share the Lift Payment with the driver as per their individual agreements.

Lift Payments are designed to improve service provision to nominated members of the community and will help ensure personalised transport services remain accessible to people with disabilities.

Passengers should note that Lift Payments can only be received by designated vehicles in the taxi industry. Lift Payments are not available to other personalised transport such as booked hire services (e.g., Uber and Ola).

**Western Australia**

To be eligible for the Taxi User Subsidy Scheme (TUSS), a person must demonstrate that they:

* Are a permanent resident in WA;
* Have a mobility, vision and/or cognitive or intellectual disability that will always prevent them using conventional public transport; and
* Are over 10 years of age, or less than 10 years of age and they use a wheelchair.[[4]](#endnote-4)

A successful applicant will be granted either:

* Temporary access to the TUSS – for a specified period of 12 months or more, after which re-assessment of their eligibility will be required; or
* Permanent access to the TUSS – ongoing access to the scheme due to evidence of a permanent disability.

The standard subsidy is a contribution of 50 per cent of the fare when travelling in a conventional vehicle, up to a maximum amount of $25, which will be provided to applicants who do not use a wheelchair.

The wheelchair subsidy is provided only to applicants who demonstrate that they require the use of a wheelchair. It amounts to:

* 50 per cent of the fare when travelling in a non-wheelchair accessible taxi without a wheelchair, up to a maximum subsidy of $25; or
* Either 50 per cent or 75 per cent of the fare (as indicated on the vouchers issued) when travelling in a non-wheelchair accessible taxi with a wheelchair, up to a maximum subsidy of $25; or
* 75 per cent of the fare when travelling in a wheelchair accessible taxi (fitted with a wheelchair hoist), up to a maximum subsidy of $35.

For group travel:

* Only one voucher from a TUSS participant in the taxi can be used in order to subsidise the fare, and only in accordance with that person's entitlement; and
* The relevant TUSS participant must be in the taxi for the entirety of the taxi journey.

TUSS reform, due to be implemented by late 2024, will result in:

* The elimination of the use of paper vouchers;
* The replacement of the current TUSS card with a modern participant card for TUSS participants; and
* The provision of a digital system for taxi drivers that will record all the trip details, supporting subsidy payments to be made more quickly.

**South Australia**

The South Australian Transport Subsidy Scheme provides taxi subsidies for people with permanent and severe disabilities that limit their ability to use public transport.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Successful applicants will receive a:

* 75 per cent subsidy for people who are permanently dependent upon a wheelchair for mobility (maximum subsidy of $30 per trip); or
* 50 per cent subsidy for people who are not permanently dependent upon a wheelchair for mobility (maximum subsidy of $20 per trip).

**Tasmania**

The Transport Access Scheme offers a 50 per cent concession on the cost of taxi travel to people with a permanent and severe disability who have been assessed as meeting eligibility criteria for membership of the Scheme. A maximum subsidy of $25 per single journey applies.[[6]](#endnote-6)

A recipient must also hold one of the following:

* A Services Australia or DVA (Department of Veterans Affairs) Pensioner Concession Card; or
* A Services Australia Health Care Card; or
* A Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

**Australian Capital Territory**

The Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) provides financial assistance to ACT residents with a disability or significant mobility restriction preventing them from using public and community transport.[[7]](#endnote-7)

To be eligible for the TSS, you must have a severe or profound activity limitation that prevents you from using public transport. Such limitations include:

* Severe mobility limitations;
* Legal blindness or severe vision impairment;
* Cognitive, intellectual or psychiatric disability; and
* Severe and uncontrolled epilepsy.

Applicants must be a permanent resident of the ACT, or an asylum seeker with proof of status from Companion House. Applicants must not be a member of an interstate taxi subsidy scheme.

From 1 July 2023, the ACT government has increased the TSS trip allocation to a maximum of 854 trips per financial year (previously 126 trips). This has removed the requirement to apply for additional trips. The subsidy amount will also increase from a maximum of $24 per trip for 50 per cent members to a maximum of $28 per trip. For 75 per cent members, this will increase from a maximum of $37 per trip to a maximum of $43 per trip.

**Northern Territory**

To access the Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS), a participant must be:

* A Northern Territory resident;
* Assessed by a health professional as having a permanent or long-term disability (longer than 6 months); and
* Unable to safely use public transport due to your disability.[[8]](#endnote-8)

TSS members receive an electronic smartcard that covers 50 per cent of the total fare for the use of a taxi or minibus. You then pay the remainder with cash, credit or debit card.

There are four levels of entitlement for the TSS – A, B, C and D. Your individual circumstances will determine which one you're eligible for.

The Northern Territory also has a Lift Incentive Scheme (LIS). To LIS, you must meet the same eligibility for the TSS and be reliant on a wheelchair.

For every journey you complete traveling in a wheelchair using a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAVs) such as a taxi or minibus, the LIS will provide a $20 incentive to the driver.

This payment is in recognition of the:

* Additional time taken to secure the wheelchair and passenger into the vehicle; and
* Potential travel time taken to commence the journey.

Eligible members can access up to 180 lift incentive credits per financial year for the use in WAVs. The lift incentive is not transferable or redeemable for cash and is not to be used as part of the fare.

1. Service NSW, “Apply for the Taxi Transport Subsidy,” accessed 31 August 2023,   
   <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-the-taxi-transport-subsidy-scheme>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria, “Multi Purpose Taxi Program,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://cpv.vic.gov.au/passengers/mptp>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Queensland Government, “Taxi Subsidy Scheme and Lift Payment,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/out-and-about/subsidies-concessions-passes/taxi-subsidy>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Government of Western Australia, “Taxi User Subsidy Scheme,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/aboutus/taxi-user-subsidy-scheme.asp>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. SA.GOV.AU, “Apply for Taxi Fare Subsidy Scheme,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/driving-and-transport/disability/taxi-fare-subsidy-scheme>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Tasmanian Government, “Taxi Subsidy Program,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://www.concessions.tas.gov.au/concessions/transport/taxis2/transport_access_scheme>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. ACT Revenue Office, “Taxi Subsidy Scheme,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/taxi-subsidy-scheme>   
    [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. NT.GOV.AU, “Transport Subsidy and Incentive Schemes,” accessed 31 August 2023, <https://nt.gov.au/driving/public-transport-cycling/help-getting-around/transport-subsidy-and-incentive-schemes> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)