

Question on Notice

No. 1798

Asked on Thursday 1 November 2007

MR CHOI ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what new initiative has been implemented to combat taxi subsidy fraud, which is wasting valuable taxpayer monies?

ANSWER:

The Taxi Subsidy Scheme, or TSS, is a Queensland Government initiative designed to improve the mobility and quality of life for Queenslanders with a disability by providing better access to affordable transport.

The TSS has been operating in Queensland since 1987 and has grown steadily with around \$12m in subsidies paid annually to about 47 000 TSS members.

TSS members are provided with a subsidy of half the total taxi fare up to a maximum of \$25. The TSS also has arrangements in place across Australia so Queensland TSS members can receive subsidised taxi travel anywhere in Australia.

Queensland Transport signed a contract with Cabcharge on 26 March 2007 to develop and implement a smartcard system to replace the existing paper based voucher system.

The new system went live on 30 October 2007.

The new TSS smartcard includes photo identification and is designed to improve security and simplicity of TSS transactions in the taxi and ensure only eligible members of the scheme receive the subsidy.

The new TSS smartcard can be used in any taxi in Queensland. It works with the Cabcharge EFTPOS equipment in taxis.

Manual equipment is used in regional and remote areas of Queensland that do not have taxi meters and EFTPOS equipment.

Our TSS members and the taxi industry have embraced the new technology. The new smartcard is easier for TSS members and taxi drivers to use than the old paper based vouchers.

The smartcard system is also less susceptible to possible fraud than the paper based system.

In the new smartcard system, TSS members and taxi drivers are validated automatically to ensure only eligible TSS members and valid taxi drivers conduct TSS subsidised trips.

The new automated system is expected to result in administrative savings for both the Queensland taxpayer and the taxi industry.