



# REGIONAL LIVEABILITY

## Pillar 5: Improve Safety and Security for Business

### TRANSPORT

As part of our “Living it up in the Regions” campaign the Chamber of Commerce is putting an emphasis on real life issues at the community level affecting business, workers, and their families. The following concentrates on Pillar 5: Improve Safety and Security for Business.

An issue which has become increasingly important during this current wave of crime and anti-social behaviour in Alice Springs is the decreasing number of options available when transporting people in and out of the Alice Springs CBD particularly at night.

#### **The Issue:**

If anybody has tried to get a taxi in Alice Springs, they clearly understand how our commercial transport service is struggling to meet the needs of the community. The unavailability of vehicles, often at peak times leads to long delays or no pickup at all resulting in a lack of confidence in the industry which can have wide-ranging repercussions for business activities in Alice Springs.

Much of the reason for this comes not from the number of vehicles available but from the limited number of drivers prepared to drive at peak hours day and night. **Commercial Transport is an essential service**, and this industry has been adversely affected by anti-social behaviour. We wanted to research why.

#### **What we did:**

We took the opportunity to meet with the Manager of Alice Springs Taxis to discuss this issue and challenges the company faces within the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry space (taxi, minibus and private hire cars) resulting in a minimal number of vehicles available at night leaving people waiting for hours to get picked up from night-time events or in many cases not picked up at all and the wide-ranging ramifications of this for our town moving forward.

#### **Other stakeholders contacted:**

- NT Government Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics about current transport and transport opportunities
- Night-time traders both in and out of the CBD (restaurants, pubs, clubs and entertainment centres)
- Consumers of transport in Alice Springs
- Wider business community.

#### **The numbers:**

- 24 Standard Taxi's
- 9 multi-purpose taxis-wheelchair accessible
- 3 minibuses
- 4 Private Hire Car Vehicles.

- No current rideshares options for residents or tourists.

## Public Transport

Below is the link to the Alice Springs Public Transport ASBUS network which includes route maps and bus timetables.

Public Transport (ASBUS) services operate Monday to Friday 7am to 6.30pm and Saturday 7am to 3.30pm. **Alice Springs Public buses do not operate on Sunday's or into the evening.**

<https://nt.gov.au/driving/public-transport-cycling/public-buses/alice-springs-timetables-and-maps>

### What else we know:

- Currently from the number of vehicles noted above between the hours of 9PM -6AM there are a maximum of 2 available, often after 4 am there are no vehicles on the road.
- Private Courtesy Buses are no longer available due to anti-social behaviour toward the drivers
- In early 2023 a taxi ballot will be held which will result in an additional 5 new taxis into the framework
- Private Hire Vehicles only pick up regular clients, most however will still not drive through the Gap at night.

### Challenges:

- Assaults of drivers
- Theft
- Rock Throwing
- Passengers absconding without payment.

### Opportunities/Solutions:

- Business group looking at a courtesy bus for night-time entertainment venues
- Encourage ride share opportunities
- Advocate for Taxis to be covered by Victims of Crime
- Advocate for Taxi's to be covered in the Bizsecure Scheme.

### Impacts on the Community:

- **Patrons at night-time venues waiting up to three hours for transport home**  
*Result:* more people in the CBD waiting outside of venues and people walking home which decreases personal safety. Reduced liveability for residents of Alice Springs.
- **People going out at night for a short time or not at all as unable to move around quickly or safely**  
*Result:* Decrease in business for night-time traders and long-time viability for business in Central Australia.
- **Difficulty for staff without transport to get to and from work in a safe, efficient and cost-effective way in particular after 9pm**  
*Result:* Reduced access to workforce, a person's ability to be able to participate in meaningful employment.
- **Reduced capacity for visitors to move easily from and around the CBD, accommodation, airports and tourist attractions**  
*Result:* Impacts on spend in local business. Potential reputational risk if the town is logistically difficult to navigate.
- **People are sometimes reluctant to drive to night time events due to potential criminal damage. Transport to and from smaller localised events is often not an option only public transport.**  
*Result:* Reduction in the number of people attending events. Reduced liveability for residents of Alice Springs.
- **Large assemblies of people on Hartley Street waiting for taxis mid-afternoon daily to return home.**  
*Result:* The absence of Commercial Transport at the Hartley Street taxi rank from 2pm in the afternoon weekdays is creating major issues, people are congregating in large numbers, many intoxicated, attempting

to get home from town. The wait for transport is resulting in frustration and almost inevitably anti-social behaviour all along Hartley Street and in between the two shopping centres.

**Other issues faced which has resulted in drivers refusing to drive at night:**

- Lack of Comprehensive Insurance- Insurance companies are now excluding windscreen cover in Alice Springs on commercial vehicles due to heightened risk
- Currently programs such as Biz Secure and Victims of Crime are not able to cover damage to taxis and subsequent loss of income as a taxi is not deemed 'a workspace'

**Case Study:**

An elderly lady calls up a wheelchair-accessible taxi to drive her from the CBD to her place of residence, after a 90-minute wait the driver arrives and gets out of the vehicle to open the backdoor and drop the wheelchair ramp to allow access to the cab. While the driver is out of the vehicle kids jump in the front of the vehicle ransacking the cabin and stealing cash. To his credit, the driver drops the lady off at her place of residence where upon arrival he is then again accosted by a group of intoxicated people.

**Result:**

Driver refuses to go to outer areas of town and won't drive after 6PM.

**Chamber lobbying:**

- In 2018 Uber ridesharing was introduced into the NT operating in Darwin and Palmerston, what are the barriers to this service being introduced/promoted to operators/individuals in Alice Springs?
- Currently Victims of Crime or Biz Secure are unable to offer cover for taxis even though in Alice Springs all drivers are sole traders and driving taxis is their business (and the taxi the business premises. We are asking for a review of these current levels of cover and an increase to the cover provided to include both sole trading and company taxi drivers.