

DEPUTY PREMIER



MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
JOHN WATKINS MP

NEWS RELEASE

LONDON FOLLOWS SYDNEY'S LEAD ON TAXI SECURITY

Sunday 18th June 2006

Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport John Watkins today said Sydney's innovative 'Secure Taxi Ranks' were now being adopted by London transport chiefs.

Mr Watkins said NSW had deployed security guards to patrol and supervise ranks in the Sydney CBD, Manly, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Griffith and Tamworth – and would soon be expanded to more locations.

"Our trials have been backed by taxi drivers, passengers, police, councils and the wider community and are taking taxi safety in a new direction," Mr Watkins said.

"Now London has cottoned-on to the idea and will put 'Marshalls' on their ranks at some railway stations.

"We're happy to share the initiative with any jurisdiction because it's proven such a success, and the lemma Government will promote any idea that improves transport safety."

Mr Watkins invited local councils, police, taxi networks and community groups interested in establishing secure ranks in their towns, to contact the NSW Ministry of Transport.

"The evaluation of the Secure Taxi Ranks trial at Manly, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury is now complete, and it's remarkably positive," Mr Watkins said.

"The overwhelming majority of survey responses from NSW Police, local councils, clubs and hotels supported the continuation of the ranks on a permanent basis," he said.

"They reported increased passenger safety, increased patronage, more 'multiple' hirings and fewer anti-social incidents including vandalism, violence and assaults.

"The surveys also identified some problems at certain spots, where we'll work with police to resolve and ensure the ranks are as safe and efficient as possible for passengers and drivers.

"Four new applications for secure ranks have already been received by the Ministry of Transport and are currently being assessed.

"Other locations should put their hand up now," he said.

Mr Watkins said NSW Police reported a significant decrease in anti-social behaviour and assaults across the four trial ranks at Dean St, Albury; Station Place, Wagga; Banna Avenue, Griffith; and Belgrave St, Manly.

Local officers made the following observations:

“The number of people attending the rank is higher than before and there was a decrease in the incidents of anti-social behaviour at the taxi rank” – Albury Police

“The trial improved the taxi service at the rank. There was significant improvement in safety and public order. Taxi patrons feel safer. There is a significant decrease in anti-social behaviour and assaults” – Wagga Police

“Security played a proactive role with all patrons by advising them of destinations, fares, multiple hiring, and directions to other transport locations. The general behaviour of patrons greatly improved. The guards provided a type of ownership of the rank which influenced the behaviour of the patrons”- Manly Police

Evaluation of the Secure Taxi Ranks Scheme also found:

- **Local Transport Working Groups should be set up to oversee their operation;**
- **Security guards be given a better understanding of the Taxi Regulation as it relates to the operation of secure ranks;**
- **Secure ranks be marketed by councils, licensed premises and other stakeholders;**
- **Some stakeholders asked the Ministry to review the operating hours of the ranks; and**
- **More efficient communications were developed between security staff, police and local taxi networks.**

“The feedback from the survey shows Secure Taxi Ranks work – passengers feel safer, anti social incidents are reduced, and taxi drivers are getting more fares,” Mr Watkins said.

“The Ministry of Transport will now work with the industry and local authorities to develop selection criteria for the new ranks.

“The Lemma Government recently announced the creation of a Taxi Safety Task Force – chaired by former Deputy Police Commissioner Dave Madden – to examine further initiatives.”

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