

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXI SERVICES

In 1981, the International Year of the Disabled, the NSW Taxi Industry became the first mode of public transport to offer services for those with special needs.

Despite early concerns from able-bodied passengers towards the larger vehicle types used for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, the Industry persisted and continued to invest in services for people with disabilities.

In 1983, the first Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Driver, Paul Bolt, was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services. He later won the prestigious Taxi Driver of the Year award from the International Taxicab, Limousine and Paratransit Association (ITLP).

However, there was much about those early experiences which helped shape the Wheelchair Accessible Taxis Service (WATS) that we have today.

The first was the establishment of 'Zero200', a centralised booking service to automatically offer the booking to the closest WAT regardless of its network.

The second was the development of the vehicle itself. In 2005, the Taxi Industry worked with Flash Cabs Australia to develop a taxi-specific vehicle which could carry people with disabilities as well as abled passengers. This vehicle is now the template for WATs. A WAT costs around three times the price of a regular taxi – despite this the NSW Taxi Industry has invested ensuring that at least 10% of the fleet is accessible.

To support this fleet growth, specific training modules have been developed to train drivers in loading and unloading techniques and other customer service requirements for people with disabilities.

Today, the centralised booking number 8332 0200 receives around 4,000 booking each week, which is in addition to more than 15,000 private bookings. Presently more than 440,000 wheelchair accessible taxi journeys are undertaken each year.

This is one part of the social and economic contribution that the NSW Taxi Industry makes to the State. Each year the Industry contributes \$1.15b to the economy, provides 17,500 full time equivalent jobs, and delivers \$20m in revenue to the NSW Government.

**TAXI
FACTS**

“I am proud of our considerable achievements for passengers with disabilities – we continue to lead the world in providing this important service.”

Roy Wakelin-King AM
CEO of the NSW Taxi Council

TAXI FACTS

- The first Wheelchair Accessible Taxi was introduced in 1981.
- In 1984, a centralised booking system was established for the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Service.
- In 2005, Australia developed its own Wheelchair Accessible Taxi vehicle.
- More than 440,000 Wheelchair Accessible Taxi journeys are undertaken annually.



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