

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2024

Explanatory Notes for SL 2024 No. 109

made under the

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994

General Outline

Short title

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2024

Authorising law

Sections 3, 10, 11 and 44 of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994* (the Act).

Policy objectives and the reasons for them

The *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2019* established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grants Scheme (the Scheme) as an approved assistance scheme under the Act.

The objectives of the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grants Scheme (the Scheme) are to modernize and reduce the average age of wheelchair accessible taxis (WAT's) being used to provide taxi services in Queensland and to provide the opportunity to replace taxis that are not wheelchair accessible vehicles with new wheelchair accessible taxis.

These objectives are achieved by assisting the holders and lessees of particular taxi service licences to meet the cost of replacing ageing wheelchair accessible taxis.

The Scheme provides a 50 per cent co-contribution grant with matched funding of up to \$45000 to assist taxi licence holders offset the cost of purchasing and modifying new WAT vehicles to replace an existing vehicle or to transition from offering a conventional taxi service to a wheelchair accessible taxi service.

The Scheme has significant funding remaining and additional time to access grants would be beneficial in providing applicants and potential applicants a greater chance to access the assistance.

Feedback from stakeholders including applicants has identified there is a supply issue with vehicles that can be converted to a WAT, with wait time anywhere from six months to two years, which delays the ability to apply for assistance. The increasing cost of vehicles and cost of living pressures necessitate an increase in grant assistance under the Scheme.

Achievement of policy objectives

To address the supply and cost issues, the Amendment Regulation extends the time applications have to be submitted to the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) until 30 June 2025 and increases the maximum funding amount per vehicle from \$45,000 to \$55,000.

Consistency with policy objectives of authorising law

The Amendment Regulation is consistent with the objectives of the Act. The Amendment Regulation will enable QRIDA to administer assistance schemes that foster the development of a more productive and sustainable rural and regional sector in Queensland and to give assistance to primary producers, small businesses or other elements of the economy in periods when they are experiencing temporary difficulty.

Inconsistency with policy objectives of other legislation

The amendment regulation is not inconsistent with the policy objectives of other legislation.

Alternative ways of achieving policy objectives

There are no feasible alternative ways to achieve the objectives other than through amendments to the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011*.

Benefits and costs of implementation

The Scheme has so far approved applications for well over half of the existing accessible taxi fleet, which ensures a modern responsive fleet for those most vulnerable in our society. Of the more than 360 approved applications, 279 new vehicles are on the road including 19 additional WAT's which have replaced conventional vehicles. The scheme has not only been successful in modernising the fleet it has increased its operating capacity.

The total funding of \$21M has all been allocated for disbursement and the only expenses are for the administration of the scheme, which have been factored into the total commitment.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

This Amendment Regulation is consistent with fundamental legislative principles as stated in the *Legislative Standards Act 1992* and has no adverse impact on the rights and liberties of individuals or on the institution of Parliament.

Consultation

Industry was consulted on the amendments through the Taxi Council Queensland. The monthly Accessible Taxi Services Working Group, convened by the previous Minister for Transport and Main Roads to address the performance of Queensland's accessible taxi fleet has also been advised of the Government's intent to extend the scheme and broaden the criteria.

In accordance with *The Queensland Government Better Regulation Policy* (the Policy), an Impact Analysis Statement has been prepared which identifies that the proposed amendments are considered machinery in nature, do not add to the burden of regulation, are unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts and that no further regulatory impact analysis is required under the Policy.