



Northern  
Territory  
Government

DEPARTMENT OF  
LANDS AND PLANNING

# **NORTHERN TERRITORY**

## **TAXI**

### **DRIVERS AND OPERATORS**

#### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
What is the Code of Conduct? .....	3
Why have a Code? .....	3
What status does the Code have? .....	4
Passenger Expectations.....	4
Passengers with Special Needs.....	5
The Taxi.....	5
Driver Appearance.....	6
Certificate of Identity .....	7
Driver and Vehicle Performance .....	7
Industry Training.....	8
Fatigue Management.....	10
The Code .....	11
Driver Obligations and Behaviour: .....	11

# INTRODUCTION

## **What is the Code of Conduct?**

The Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines designed to set minimum taxi industry protocol and standards of customer service.

These are service standards that can be improved upon by licensed operators, drivers and communications networks as they seek to differentiate themselves from other competitors in the commercial passenger vehicle industry. To do this the Northern Territory Taxi Industry is expected to maintain high standards and provide a high quality of service to the hirer.

The impression visitors often gain of the Northern Territory can be influenced by the quality of service received from the driver of a commercial passenger vehicle.

## **Why have a Code?**

This Code of Conduct has been developed through consultation between the Taxi Industry and the Transport Services Division of the Department of Lands and Planning and other user groups. The Code of Conduct is designed to advise drivers and operators of their responsibilities and obligations to comply with the applicable legislation.

This Code of Conduct is also available to members of the general public to advise them of the minimum standard of service they can expect from the taxi industry.

Taxi drivers are expected to be professional in their approach to the industry and to drive **safely and defensively** in all weather and traffic conditions.

It is in the interest of owners and operators to provide professional training for all drivers to ensure a high quality of service is provided to all customers. It is essential that operators and drivers are aware of the legislative requirements applicable to their industry and that they manage any taxi operation in accordance with these requirements.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, drivers and operators are required to comply with all the conditions set out in the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Licence (CVL).

## **What status does the Code have?**

The Director, Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport, pursuant to section 72(1) of the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act*, has approved this Code of Conduct. Drivers and operators of a taxi, including MPT's and Sub Taxi's are required to comply with this Code of Conduct when carrying passengers for hire or reward. Contravention of this Code of Conduct when carrying passengers for hire or reward, may result in fines (up to \$2000) and possible restrictions of the taxi operation.

Other relevant legislation includes, but is not restricted to:

- *Motor Vehicles Act*
- *Traffic Regulations*
- *Taxi Regulations*
- *Commercial Passenger (Miscellaneous) Regulations*
- *Hire Car Regulations*

Copies of the relevant *Acts* and *Regulations* are available from the Government Printing Office in Darwin and the Town Library in Alice Springs. The Code of Conduct is available from all Motor Vehicle Registry Offices in the Northern Territory or on-line at [www.mvr.nt.gov.au](http://www.mvr.nt.gov.au)

## **Passenger Expectations**

### Conditions relating to the carriage of passengers

Passengers travelling in taxis expect operators and drivers to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner and to comply with all relevant legislation. Passengers also expect a high level of service in accordance with the appropriate standards prescribed in this Code of Conduct.

These expectations include, but are not restricted to:

- Set the taximeter in operation only at the commencement of the hiring or at the agreed pre-arranged time.
- Disengage the taximeter at the end of the hiring.
- Informed about the conditions of operation of a taxi.
- Timely response to all hirings
- Clean and presentable driver and vehicle.
- Good knowledge of local routes, major and tourist destinations.
- Friendly, courteous and helpful driver behaviour.
- Assistance with luggage and doors.
- A sense of safety while travelling.
- Australian and Northern Territory Road Rules to be observed at all times.
- Ability to use the NT Taxi Subsidy Scheme Smartcard and the Lift Incentive Scheme.

If a passenger believes that he/she has not received the appropriate standard of service from a taxi driver or operator, he/she may lodge a complaint to the relevant authority. In the first instance this would be the taxi network provider for which that taxi is operating, Police or the Accreditation and Audit branch of the Vehicle Standards and Compliance unit of the Department of Lands and Planning. The complaint will be investigated by suitably delegated officers and; if the allegations are proven; appropriate action will be taken.

## **Passengers with Special Needs**

Passengers with special needs are to be given all reasonable assistance with due consideration for their specific requirements. Passengers in wheelchairs must be transported in accordance with all safety guidelines and recommendations specifically appropriate to the use of wheelchair restraints.

Passengers with disabilities who are members of the Northern Territory Taxi Subsidy Scheme (NT TSS) may use the approved NT TSS Smartcard as part payment of the prescribed fare. Members of the NT TSS are entitled to pay 50% of the metered fare using the Smartcard when travelling in either a standard taxi or a multiple purpose taxi (MPT). Drivers cannot demand that NT TSS members pay the full fare with the Smartcard only. Payment may be made using a combination of the Smartcard (50% only) and the remainder by cash and or credit/debit card.

All Australian States and Territories issue members of their Taxi Subsidy Schemes with special vouchers to use when travelling interstate. Conditions for the use of each of these interstate vouchers are printed on each voucher. The Northern Territory provides mutual recognition for these interstate vouchers and all Northern Territory taxi drivers **must** accept them.

## **The Taxi**

The Traffic Regulations require all registered motor vehicles, including taxis, to be in a roadworthy and safe condition at all times. Taxis are required to be maintained to a higher standard as approved by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, while registered and operating as a taxi.

The Registrar, or his/her delegate/s, may inspect or require a taxi to be inspected at **any time**. If a vehicle is found to be unroadworthy, unsafe, cosmetically poor or dirty in appearance remedial action may be taken against the driver and or the operator. In some cases the operation of that vehicle may be restricted until the situation is satisfactorily rectified.

A driver operating a vehicle with mechanical defects may be issued with a Defect Notice and/or a summons may be issued. A vehicle under such a notice will not be able to operate for hire or reward until the identified mechanical faults are repaired and the Defect Notice removed by MVR Transport Inspectors or Northern Territory Police (in some remote areas only).

A driver operating a vehicle that does not achieve the approved minimum cosmetic standard may be issued a traffic infringement notice or, a summons may be issued. Vehicles that do not meet the minimum standards will not be able to operate for hire or reward until the condition of that vehicle is such that it meets the required standards.

## **Driver Appearance**

Taxi drivers shall maintain a neat and tidy appearance at all times while driving a Taxi that is available for hire. The minimum allowable standard of dress is:

### Male:

1. Full covered shoes and socks.
2. Shirt with collar and sleeves.
3. Tailored slacks, tailored shorts, full-length denim pants or tailored denim shorts.

### Female:

1. Full covered shoes (heels less than 50mm) and socks/stockings.
2. Tailored slacks, skirt with hem line not more than 5cm above the knee, tailored shorts, full-length denim pants or denim shorts.
3. Shirt with collar and sleeves.
4. Dress with sleeves and a hem line not more than 5cm above the knee.

### Interpretations:

**Neat and Tidy:** Clean and free from stains and or excessive wrinkles. Not frayed, torn or holed, or having loose threads which may detract from the original condition when new. All shirt fasteners (i.e. buttons, zips etc) are to be fastened to at least the mid point of the sternum.

**Tailored:** Tailored clothing is generally considered to be designed to present a higher standard of appearance. Sports or fitness type clothing, standard work or “stubby” type shorts, cut off denim shorts and Lycra etc are **not** acceptable.

An operator or network provider may apply for approval to introduce a company or network uniform. The uniform must meet the above minimum requirements and have the prior approval of the Director. Drivers operating within that network or company are required to wear that uniform at all times when on duty, unless that uniform is temporarily unavailable from that company or network.

### General:

Individual companies may submit requests for approval of their uniform to the Director. The Director may approve that dress standard as the minimum standard of dress for that company.

### Comment:

Drivers and operators of taxis working within a company or network, which have had a uniform approved, must comply with that company or network’s uniform standard. Negotiations relating to the supply and or costing of these uniforms are the responsibility of the drivers, operators and networks.

## Certificate of Identity or CPVID cards

All CPV drivers must be appropriately licensed under the Motor Vehicles Act and have an “h” (hire or reward) endorsement on that driver licence prior to commencing any work as a commercial passenger vehicle driver. Taxi drivers also require a certificate of identity, commonly known as a Commercial Passenger Vehicle Driver Identity Card (CPVID card). This card **must** be displayed in a prominent location clearly visible to all passengers at all times. Drivers who fail to display their CPVID card as required or who drive a taxi without obtaining one may be subject to remedial action.

If a driver fails to display or has not obtained a CPV ID card, that driver will **not** be able to drive any taxi for hire or reward until the situation is rectified. Only the identification card belonging to the driver operating the taxi at that time is to be displayed.

## Driver and Vehicle Performance

The taxi industry must endeavour to employ drivers who have the practical ability and maturity together with a high degree of professionalism to enable them to deal with all types of people and situations.

It is expected that all drivers will have a good working knowledge of the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act, Taxi Regulations* and this Code of Conduct and observe the requirements of same at all times while driving a taxi.

The driver of a taxi is required to comply with all the relevant Australian and Northern Territory Road Rules when driving that vehicle.

The driver is also required to drive the vehicle, as far as is practical, in such a way that the passengers are afforded a smooth ride with a feeling of safety.

### Comments:

This Code of Conduct is designed to assist industry members in providing a high quality of service to all taxi passengers. The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide for all situations; however it is intended to ensure that the passenger leaves the taxi satisfied with the service received. All operators and drivers should strive to improve the quality of service they provide at all times.

It should be noted that the taxi industry has an important community road safety role to play to encourage all persons who have been drinking alcohol, not to drive. Taxi drivers are, however, entitled to judge whether a prospective passenger is likely to cause a nuisance or hazard to others or the taxi. An understanding of the relevant legislation will assist the driver in deciding on appropriate action.

## Industry Training

### Requirements

To ensure a high quality of service is provided to all taxi customers' all operators are required to provide professional training for all drivers, and drivers have an obligation to undertake such training as is requested.

It is essential that drivers entering the taxi industry are appropriately trained to provide the high levels of service expected by the community. Similarly it is important that drivers who are already in the industry are provided with regular refresher training to ensure that they keep up to date with changing customer expectations and legislation.

Shortcomings in a driver's behaviour may require that driver to undertake complete re-training or specific sections of re-training. Such re-training will be in that drivers own time and at that drivers own expense. Operators and network providers may set a training or refresher training schedule for all drivers. They may also request an individual driver to undertake full or part re-training if shortcomings are identified in that driver's behaviour or conduct.

Taxi drivers will enter the industry in one of the Gazetted taxi areas and may then relocate to one of the other gazetted areas. It is the responsibility of a taxi operator and/or network provider to ascertain each relocating driver's knowledge of the local taxi area. Relocating drivers will be required to undergo location re-training to improve their knowledge of the new taxi area.

### **NT Taxi Subsidy Scheme (NT TSS) Smartcards and Lift Incentive Scheme**

The NT TSS provides eligible members with a subsidy of 50% or one half of a taxi fare. The other half of the fare may be paid in cash and/or credit/debit card by the member. All drivers **must** accept the NT TSS Smartcard when offered by an eligible member.

Each member is issued with a NT TSS smartcard. The Smartcard is designed to help protect the members' subsidy by ensuring that only the correct subsidy amount for a taxi trip is deducted from the card. As a further safeguard the Smartcard also displays the member's digital image, similar to the image on a driver licence.

#### **Drivers:**

You are required to check that the digital image on the Smartcard matches the passenger being carried (the member of the scheme) in the vehicle.

At the beginning of each journey, you can conduct a balance enquiry by inserting the NT TSS card in the Smartcard reader (EFTPOS terminal) and following the prompts on the display. This process will validate the membership and allow the subsidy to be automatically deducted from the fare at the end of the trip.

Transactions are limited to 50% of the total fare per journey and the member must pay half the fare amount by either cash and/or credit/card. This type of card needs to be inserted in the EFTPOS terminal and left in place until the transaction is completed.

The old paper vouchers are **no** longer valid. All eligible members must provide the smartcard to access the NT TSS.

The transactions are processed electronically through the terminal. The taxi operator will pay you in a similar manner as you are for other transactions that you process through the terminal.

If your EFTPOS terminal is faulty or the network system is down you are permitted to use an emergency CABCHARGE docket provided to your network by DLP. Your EFTPOS terminal must be repaired as soon as possible.

You are **not** permitted to use an emergency docket if the Smartcard has expired, is damaged or in any other way faulty.

At the end of the journey you must return the Smartcard to the member of the scheme, or the member's carer.

**Emergency dockets will only be used in situations where the system is down or the Taxi equipment has failed and the failure can be substantiated.**

The Smartcards are robust and should not become damaged through normal use. If however the card is damaged or faulty, the smartcard reader PINpad screen will provide prompts and information about the problem to the driver.

Emergency dockets must **not** be used for damaged Smartcards, the member of the scheme will be required to pay the full taxi fare. The driver should provide a receipt as proof of fare payment.

### **Lift Incentive Scheme**

The Lift Incentive is provided by the Northern Territory Government to drivers of MPTs, through Smartcards that are allocated to persons in the NT Taxi Subsidy Scheme (NT TSS) category of A and B MPV who require the use of a wheelchair/mobility device to travel and have been assessed as requiring the use of a Multiple Purpose Taxi (or other CPV constructed or equipped to carry wheelchair passengers).

The Lift Incentive recognises that wheelchair/mobility device passengers may require more time to embark and disembark a MPT than other passengers may do; the Lift Incentive recognises that there are times when drivers do not charge for loading time, even though they are permitted to do so. It also encourages MPT drivers to pick up more passengers in wheelchairs/mobility devices before seeking other hiring's as is required by Legislation.

## **Lift Incentive hiring's**

A MPT driver will not be able to charge for waiting time if the driver receives a Lift Incentive payment for the trip. Refer to Section 3A of the *Taxis Regulations*.

A driver is entitled to decline the Lift Incentive and charge for waiting time instead. Either the lift incentive or the waiting time is applied to each trip **but not both for the same trip**.

A passenger may choose not to provide the Lift Incentive for a trip – this may occur if the passenger chooses to spread his or her allocation over the course of the year.

If a carer helps a passenger to embark and/or disembark an MPT, a Lift Incentive may still be paid at the discretion of the passenger.

If a passenger does not have any Lift Incentives left or chooses not to offer a Lift Incentive, a driver may charge for waiting time in accordance with the *Taxi Regulations*.

A passenger may mention and offer (but is not obliged to) the Lift Incentive when booking an MPT. If the driver is aware that the lift incentive has been offered it may help the driver to ensure that the Lift Incentive or waiting time is validly transacted.

## **Fatigue Management**

Under NT Work Health Legislation all employers have a duty of care to provide a safe workplace. The Commercial Passenger Vehicle industry is no different.

Employers have a duty of care to identify the hazards in the workplace, assess the risks and control the risks. In this case the hazard is the effect of fatigue which can be caused by the extended periods that drivers may spend behind the wheel of the taxi transporting passengers and themselves from location to location. The risk assessment can be high and the control is to implement a fatigue management system in accordance with the Northern Territory Fatigue Management Code of Practice.

# THE CODE

Operators and drivers are required to adhere to this Code of Conduct at all times when driving a commercial passenger vehicle that is available for hire or reward.

## **Driver Obligations and Behaviour:**

1. Carry a current street directory for the area of operation noted on the Commercial Passenger Licence issued to that taxi.
2. A driver must display his/her own CPVID card in a conspicuous position clearly visible to all passengers sitting in all seating positions within the vehicle.
3. Be polite and courteous to passengers and provide all reasonable assistance in loading and unloading luggage.
4. Be understanding and sensitive to passengers' special needs, including the needs of people with disabilities as noted elsewhere in this code of conduct.
5. Provide a priority service to a person in a wheelchair when driving a multiple purpose taxi (MPT). Priority service means immediately proceeding to take up a hiring by a person in a wheelchair and picking up the person before accepting any other hiring.
6. Notify the communications network when an MPT is not available for hire or reward during its shift. Notification by the driver must occur at the start and at the end of the period that an MPT is not available for hire or reward.
7. Comply with Northern Territory and Interstate Taxi Subsidy Scheme conditions as set down in this code of conduct.
8. Carry a current copy of the NT Taxi Regulations, and the NT Taxi Drivers and Operators Code of Conduct in the vehicle for reference at the request of a passenger, intending passenger, a Transport Inspector or Police Officer acting in the execution of that Inspector's or Officer's duty.
9. In relation to fares and meters:
  - 9.1. Give and count back correct change at the termination of the hiring and have sufficient change to do so to the value of \$50.00.
  - 9.2. Additional surcharges are not permitted, unless approved in writing by the Director.
  - 9.3. For multiple hirings, the fare shall be calculated at 75% of the appropriate tariff and the driver is only to multi hire if the meter is equipped to calculate multi-hire fares.
10. Whenever the taxi has more than one person (driver being one person) in the taxi, the taximeter is to be engaged, or the meter is to be switched off and the network notified that the taxi is off air and not operating as a taxi.
11. Maintain the vehicle to the approved minimum standard.

12. Drivers must maintain the minimum dress standard stated elsewhere in this document.
13. Where the taxi company or network has submitted a uniform and that uniform has been approved, it must be worn by all drivers of that company or network at all times while the vehicle is available for hire or reward. A driver that is not engaged by that company or network shall not wear that company's or network's approved uniform.
14. A driver shall not use a communication device, including a mobile phone, to coordinate or control any other commercial passenger vehicle, including the use of a hands free device.
15. Drivers are not to use a communication device, including a mobile phone, for personal conversations when carrying passengers; this includes a hands free device.
16. Drivers are not to hold or take any passengers' cash as credit in advance for future journeys, booked or otherwise, unless a receipt is issued and the communications network is notified.
17. Drivers are not to hold or take any form of passengers' credit/debit or savings card, or other electronic cash transaction card including the NT TSS Smartcard, for any reason other than handling a card during the process of performing a transaction for the payment of travel that has just ceased.
18. Drivers are not to hold or take any items or goods as bond until the passenger has furnished the driver with the prescribed fee as noted on the taximeter, unless a receipt for that item is issued and the communications network is notified.