

Regulatory and/or Licensing Bodies

- The Department of Transport and Main Roads WA are the entities responsible for licensing and regulatory requirements in the road transport industry.
- In mid-2019, the *Transport (Road Passenger Services) Act 2018* replaced the *Taxi Act 1994* and parts of the *Transport Co-ordination Act 1966*.ⁱ Owned taxi plates in Perth have now been converted to 'Passenger Transport Vehicle authorisations'.ⁱⁱ Taxi-car licences in regional areas will be transitioned to Passenger Transport Vehicle Rank or Hail (PTV-RH).ⁱⁱⁱ

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

1. Existing and anticipated supply and demand for skills:

- Recent adverse weather conditions (i.e. flooding, bushfires and drought) and COVID-19 is anticipated to have a long-term impact on industry.^{iv} *Please refer to the section Industry Impacts from COVID-19 for further details.*
- This sector includes metropolitan and regional Bus Drivers, On-demand (Taxi and Rideshare operators), tourism and charter services.
- Most employers continue to use a variety of means to advertise for a position such as Seek and word-of-mouth. Social media, including Facebook is also used to tap into a younger cohort. In regional centres, advertising is done using billboards located in the industrial areas.
- The nature of work is changing as Big Data is embraced by industry. The increase in data has created a flow on effect in expanding and embedding more systems to allow for the data to be stored and analysed. The much larger volumes of data has created the need for data analyst roles to work alongside Schedulers.^v
- Recruitment for bus drivers continues to be an issue for some metropolitan based passenger services, with many recruits lacking the driving skills and experience needed to drive passenger buses.^{vi}
- The bus driving role is well suited to Defence veterans with many characteristics of the role, such as route planning, communication and familiarity with shiftwork befitting this cohort.
- The number of workers engaged in on-demand transport has increased since the introduction of new reforms with more than 600 on-demand booking services now authorised to operate in WA. For many of these Drivers this is often their second job.^{vii} This will continue to increase the number of workers engaged in on-demand transport.^{viii}
- Growth in technology adoption and advances in mobile technology have made app-based providers more accessible to users in the community. Additionally, increasing urbanisation and population growth are anticipated to increase the potential number of users in the next five years as service providers expand their operations into WA.^{ix}
- Millennials continue to prefer sourcing on-demand transport via app-based operators. Previously, on-demand transport was excluded from Fringe Benefit Tax Exemptions, however the rules regarding this have now been made clearer to allow transport via ride-sourcing apps to be claimed under business expenses in some situations.^x
- Nationally, legislative and regulatory systems are being developed for the future deployment and use of autonomous vehicles for passenger transport and should be in effect by 2020 (this could be delayed by COVID-19)^{xii}. Three trials of these vehicles are occurring in WA and around Australia, however, the deployment of these vehicles is predicted to be at least 10 years away.^{xiii} Once these vehicles are introduced, the future workforce will be impacted as the training and skills requirements will change, and opportunities for job redesign and redeployment may emerge. It is anticipated that workers and demand for skills in this area will increase slowly over time, with lower uptake in metropolitan regions first.
- Relevant qualifications are available in WA, however, given that this is a regulated industry, a minimum level licence (to gain entry) is required. Relevant work experience is then obtained with an employer without necessarily obtaining a full formal qualification, as skill sets are preferred.^{xiv}

- Industry continues to be affected by skills shortages for the Scheduler occupation. This role requires specific skill sets for the coordination and movement of people. Typically, industry prefers to promote people from within the organisation to ensure they have enough experience to operate in these roles, however, recent changes to CoR legislation has made this difficult.^{xv} A VET qualification has now been endorsed for this role.^{xvi}
- The new reforms affecting regional taxi and charter vehicles under the new Act will require additional accredited training be provided for Drivers (i.e. communication and safe behaviours, and providing services and support to passengers with disabilities).^{xvii}
- Due to the potential risk implications and duty of care requirements for both the individual and the employer, it is not practical for recent graduates to attain high level roles immediately.^{xviii}
- Drivers in the passenger transport industry are required to possess a HR licence as a minimum. However, as a licence does not necessarily reflect the level of experience drivers have for this role, Industry reports many applicants are not able to demonstrate the necessary ability or skill needed when applying for jobs.^{xix}

Regional Concerns

- Some regionally-based operators have raised viability concerns with some operators having had to reduce staff numbers and/or close operations in order for their businesses to remain competitive.^{xx}
- Concerns have been raised over the ability of regional on-demand transport operators to continue to be able to meet the needs of members of the community such as those with special needs/access issues. Operators report that staffing issues, and a reduction in specialised On-demand transport vehicles (ie maxi taxis) may create bottlenecks, particularly in regional zones where app-based operators are not yet in abundance.^{xxi}

2. Emerging international, national or State training issues impacting your industry

- With the implementation of the new Act, On-demand operators will be required to hire an accredited trainer or become a trainer themselves to implement training per the Act.^{xxii}
- In this industry many applicants from migrant backgrounds possess higher education degrees that are not recognised in Australia. This is particularly true for bus drivers within the metropolitan areas. Some of these are lost to the industry when they have been able to re-train or receive recognition for their previous qualifications.^{xxiii}
- There continues to be a greater amount of compliance and regulation (driver fatigue), interaction with new technology (telematics and cameras), customer service and evolving road conditions (increased congestion, roundabouts, narrower roads) for Drivers to navigate in their role. For some this has been seen as a deterrent for new workers to enter the industry.^{xxiv}
- Greater use of smartphone technology is likely to be taken up by users within the On-demand Transport industry, particularly from those previously considered 'taxi operators'. These services will allow operators to reach a wider audience to provide a seamless customer experience.^{xxv}
- The Heavy Haulage Driving Operations Skills Set was developed following ongoing discussions with industry and the LDSC; and will provide Drivers with the opportunity to develop end-to-end skills needed for the workplace. South Regional TAFE is working with Keens Truck Driver Training to deliver this new program.^{xxvi}

INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

Strategic directions, policies and priorities for industry

- As new jobs are emerging from advances in automation and the use of artificial intelligence changes the nature of work, organisations are making efforts to redesign existing job roles through upskilling the current workforce, and redesigning existing job roles.^{xxvii}

- Transport companies are seeking a more diverse workforce and are redesigning policies and procedures, as well as introducing initiatives to attract and retain this diversity.^{xxviii}

Industry Impacts Caused From COVID-19

- Affecting all industries, a series of temporary Award and leave benefits were announced offering unpaid pandemic leave and offering annual leave flexibility to employees affected by COVID-19. This assisted employers to maintain staff levels for jobs that were under hiatus or seeing reduced trade. The new measures ended on 30 June 2020.^{xxix}
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing national employment is projected to grow at 4.3% annually for the period 2019-2023. However, this figure is now unclear given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{xxx}

On-demand Transport

- During the beginning of the COVID-19 restrictions, Rideshare and taxi operators experienced a severe downturn in usage, resulting in declines to workforce numbers. Taxi flag-falls for one company dropped 37% in March (compared to 2019) and towards the end of March 2020/beginning of April 2020 the decline was above 80%, with some companies having less than 50% of all fleet vehicles on the road. For regional taxi operators the loss of income has been estimated to be approximately 70% compared to the same time last year.^{xxxi}
- Some on demand platforms have introduced measures to provide financial aid to Drivers and to encourage Drivers to self-isolate if sick. All on-demand as well as public transport operators are implementing increased sanitisation protocols to assist and protect both Drivers and customers. This includes reducing the number of cash transactions, encouraging passengers to sit in the back of vehicles (i.e. On-demand) and sanitising vehicles more frequently.^{xxxii}
- The deadline for taxis to install camera surveillance units has been delayed by a year. More than 600 on demand booking services, including taxi operators in regional areas will receive payment from the State Governments recently announced COVID-19 relief package. This will relieve some of the financial pressures for regional operators to assist them in maintaining service delivery in regional areas.^{xxxiii}
- In addition to the decline in patronage, some companies reported many self-employed lease drivers elected to discontinue driving due to their own personal risks due to COVID-19, with some Taxi Drivers electing to subsidise their income with JobKeeper payments (i.e. particularly for contract Drivers). It is unlikely these drivers will return to normal duties before September 2020, meaning that taxi companies are operating with a much smaller fleet.^{xxxiv} Following these changes, there is a low level of optimism within this industry for business activity to resume to pre-COVID-19 levels, particularly for regional operators.^{xxxv}
- During the early stages of COVID-19 declines in passenger transport for On-demand operators was the result of people heeding government restrictions and limiting outings to essential trips only, resulting in a lower demand for drivers and lowered weekend revenue. Weekday runs have now increased in capacity for essential trips such as transit to/from work, train stations, supermarkets, hospitals, and airports (for domestic travellers).^{xxxvi}
- To address declines in patronage one Rideshare platform offered a supper sanitized version of its service. The service offers to separate clients behind a 'hygiene screen' and provides additional sanitization kits (wipes, gloves, hand sanitizer and facemask). It is uncertain how many Drivers were offering this service in WA or if it will increase the demand for Rideshare drivers.^{xxxvii}
- Rideshare platforms such as Uber and Didi, and some taxi companies such as 13 cabs (which also operates in WA) are exploring alternative ways to generate revenue such as providing deliveries/courier services. Some regional Taxi operators who have already been offering this service have reported a continued need for this service type (i.e. pharmaceuticals, hydroponics, food, pathology lab deliveries) to offset downturn in patronage. If successful, other similar platforms may see an increase in the number of drivers operating on their platforms.
- Some taxi companies are considering a permanent business model shift and continuing to target only niche markets (i.e. only providing wheelchair accessible and MPTs) in order to compete with other on-demand services. This may lead to a need for specific training for these drivers.^{xxxviii}

- Although there has been an overall reduction, wheelchair accessible services and multi-purpose taxis (MPTs) are still in high demand.^{xxxix}
- The high use of MPT vehicles has added additional duties for Taxi operators to ensure vehicles comply with disinfection protocols and to protect customers who require these vehicles. As an example, some providers have quarantined the use of specific vehicles and their drivers to particular individuals to further reduce their risk of infection by ensuring they have the same vehicle and driver each time.^{xi} In order to meet the increase in disinfection and hygiene protocols additional cleaners have been hired to detail drivers' vehicles.^{xii}
- Once in the recovery phase taxi operators foresee a slow and steady approach to resuming shifts. Much of their activity will be based around the extent that the hospitality industry also resumes thereby increasing the need for On-demand transport services.^{xiii}

Buses

- There has been some downturn in business for passenger transport in metropolitan areas due to the downturn in events (i.e. school carnivals, Ascot races etc), however this has not impacted workforce numbers.^{xliii}
- Patronage on public transport services in metropolitan areas reduced by about 80% during the height of the restrictions, the lowest in three years, as students and businesses adapted to new working from home arrangements, and other patrons conformed to the social distancing measures. As a result, reduced service arrangements were temporarily put in place. The Public Transport Authority (PTA) closely monitored user numbers to adapt/change routes as needed in line with social distancing and other requirements. This had low impact to the number of Drivers required within the passenger transport network with no permanent job losses.^{xliii} As a result, Passenger transport has maintained staffing levels (idle workers have now returned to work).^{xliii}
- Many bus charter operators saw a downturn in bookings due the loss of international tourism (Chinese tours had historically been a large part of the charter market), cancellation of school excursions and other extracurricular activities. In addition, it is likely school bus routes (particularly for regional zones) were affected as more schools and students transitioned to online learning from home during the early stages of COVID restrictions.^{xliii}
- Charter bus companies in regional areas were most affected due to the reduction in school traffic and tourism with many casual workers permanently stood down, roles condensed, or additional duties being absorbed by the Manager/Operator until business activity resumes. Many regional employers have continued efforts to stay in touch with ex-employees (particularly those who have been trained) in order to secure their services once business activity increases.^{xliii}
- For some regional employers operating charter and school bus routes, the level of optimism for industry recovery is high. However, for one regional employer charter operations were no longer in demand with no bookings being made between 16 March 2020 and 25 May 2020, with some reductions in staff numbers as a result.^{xliii}
- As restrictions ease the level of optimism is higher for the bus network in metropolitan regions with regular services resuming and no long-term shifts in staff capacity occurring. This was due to workers returning to the office, the mandatory requirement for students to return to school and some special events resuming (i.e. football).^{xliii}
- Recruitment efforts were temporarily placed on hold for approximately one month with efforts to source previous workers who have left the company used to fill any workforce gaps. With restrictions easing these holds are now over with recruitment and training efforts now back online and at pre-COVID-19 levels.ⁱ
- Tour and charter bus companies are implementing alternative measures to achieve income streams for one off or special COVID-19 related events (i.e. providing transport to quarantine stations or picking up footballers and taking to designated).ⁱⁱ
- As restrictions continue to ease it is anticipated some hygiene protocols will be lessened, however some measures, such as the reduction in cash handling and use of plastic barriers is likely to continue post-COVID-19.ⁱⁱⁱ

Impacts to Training and Delivery

- All PTA and on-demand and passenger transport Drivers are required to adhere to strict infection control guidelines relating to the hygiene of their vehicles, depots/stations, money handling, knowledge of social distancing (including the restriction of front seats on both buses and on demand vehicles) and disinfection guidelines and protocols. Most training and education regarding COVID-19 practices is provided in-house by operators in line with their own policies, procedures and response to COVID-19. ^{liii}
- For all companies there has been an increase in compliance responsibilities to ensure all staff are aware of COVID-19 practices and restrictions. In many instances Managers are taking on these extra responsibilities themselves. Due to the added demands on the Managers they are not finding time to do any training. On-demand operators (known formerly as Taxis) anticipate it would take approximately 2 weeks for someone to be competent to work within their industry. ^{liv}
- Delays in attaining taxi licences in regional areas (can take six to eight weeks) may increase delays in getting competent individuals trained and operating leased/taxi vehicles needed in the recovery phase. ^{lv}
- The Federal Governments JobTrainer package will assist industries to develop their workforce by providing retraining and upskilling opportunities for people to enter industries currently surging as well as helping skilled and/or displaced workers to enter alternative industries^{lvi}

Jobs in Demand and Training Required

- Some industries, such as Rideshare platforms, are seeking to enter the courier market and re-deploy drivers to assist with courier deliveries. Australia Post will be re-training their fleet of 2000 motorbike postal workers to assist with delivery of parcels and relieve pressure on delivery van drivers, with the use of electric scooter cart fleets being deployed in metropolitan areas. ^{lvii}
- Organisations within the taxi industry have noted their vital role in providing transport services for elderly and disabled passengers, particularly in regional WA. This type of employment is flexible and would suit older and/or injured workers to return to workforce. Skills in demand include a knowledge of geography, communication, customer service and despatcher skills. ^{lviii}
- The taxi industry has noted a high level of difficulty in finding workers with previous skills shortages in this area continuing to impact on business operations. ^{lix}
- A COVID-19 skill set to provide standardised training for the On-demand sector would be well regarded by industry. ^{lx}
- Currently taxi operators are providing training for communication skills in house as well as car detailing at the beginning and end of shifts. ^{lxi}
- Industry would also value cultural awareness skills training for bus drivers, particularly for those operating tourism related routes. ^{lxii}

ⁱ What is on-demand transport? <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/On-demandTransport/what-is-on-demand-transport.asp> [last updated 22 January 2019]

ⁱⁱ Department of Transport, source: <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/On-demandTransport/voluntary-buy-back-for-taxi-plate-owners.asp>. [last updated 1 February 2019]

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Transport <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/On-demandTransport/safety-management-for-authorized-booking-services.asp> [last updated 27 February 2019]

^{iv} Industry Consultation 2020

^v Industry Consultation 2020

^{vi} Industry Consultation 2020

^{vii} Department of Transport, 17 May 2019, On-Demand Transport Industry Newsletter

^{viii} Department of Transport, Become and Authorised on-demand Booking service source: <https://odtmasterlatest13march2019oneoffonly.cmail19.com/t/y-l-uliururi-thuijdyklh-y/> [last accessed 20/05/2019]

^{ix} IbisWorld, 2018,

^x ABC News, 8 July 2019, ATO says employers using UBER for staff can't get tax breaks, but those using 'taxi's' can; Australian Taxation Office, Phone consultation, March 2020

^{xi} Ibis World, (May 2019), Taxi and Limousine Transport In Australia

^{xii} National Transport Commission <https://www.ntc.gov.au/about-ntc/news/media-releases/transport-ministers-agree-to-drafting-new-australian-driving-laws-for-automated-vehicles/> [last accessed 11 March 2019]

^{xiii} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xiv} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xv} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xvi} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xvii} Department of Transport <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/On-demandTransport/safety-management-for-authorized-booking-services.asp> [last updated 27 February 2019]

^{xviii} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xix} Industry Consultation 2020

^{xx} Industry Consultation 2020

