



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

August 13, 2003

**ATTENTION: EDITOR/ CHIEF OF STAFF**

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### **TAXI INDUSTRY WELCOMES BUYBACK BACKDOWN**

The WA taxi industry has welcomed the State Government's decision last night to abandon its controversial plan to progressively buy back about 940 privately owned taxi plates. The proposal was overwhelmingly opposed by taxi drivers and plate owners.

The Taxi Council of WA, representing some 800 owners and the industry, and the West Australian Taxi Association, representing about 3000 drivers, said the decision by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Alannah MacTiernan would restore stability and confidence to the well-run industry.

"The \$200 million buyback, which would have seen ownership of the industry pass into the hands of a bank and ultimately the State Government, was ill-conceived and we congratulate the Minister for adhering to her commitment not to proceed if the industry opposed it," Council chairman Kevin Foley said.

"The anger and frustration felt by the owners and drivers had reached boiling point and a mass rally on Parliament House was planned for today. I'm very pleased that crisis talks with the Minister late yesterday have led to the proposal being shelved."

Mr Foley said that the industry had agreed to work closely with the Government to resolve concerns about the issue and conditions of future taxi plate releases to ensure that the public received the best service and drivers' incomes and industry viability was protected. More licences should be issued to service people with disabilities and weekend peak periods.

"We look forward to working with the Minister and the Government on these issues," Mr Foley said.

Taxi Association President Tony D'Ercole said that the drivers were pleased that the stability of their industry had been restored but was disappointed that the Government would lease taxi plates to drivers rather than provide a taxi plate purchase option.

"Our drivers are hard-working people providing a crucial and good service to Perth residents and visitors. Most dream of owning a taxi plate one day as investments in a small business that could secure their future. If the Government were to provide an ownership plan to drivers, rather than only a rental option, this would make their dream a reality and secure their future and the high quality taxi service delivered to the community," Mr D'Ercole said.

"We believe that the industry should be owned and run by those who work in it".

Taxi Council of Western Australia believes the Government should consult with the taxi industry on this detail.

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