

**DEPUTY PREMIER**



**MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT & MINISTER FOR FINANCE**

**JOHN WATKINS MP**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **HIRE CARS AND TAXIS GO GREEN**

State Plan Priority E3: Cleaner air and progress on greenhouse gas emissions

28 November 2007

Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport John Watkins today announced that the environmentally friendly Toyota Prius had been cleared to operate both as a hire car and a taxi in Sydney.

Mr Watkins said the decision comes as the trial of the Prius as a taxi continues and following a change in the specifications for hire cars in NSW.

“An increasing number of ‘green’ public transport options are being offered for commuters” Mr Watkins said.

“That is why we have supported the Legion Cabs trial of hybrid taxis and changed regulations around hire cars to allow hybrids, providing the opportunity for this form of transport to become more environmentally friendly.”

“A trial of Sydney’s first “green” taxi, a Toyota Prius operated by Legion Cabs has been operating since early 2006,” he said.

The trial is assessing if the vehicle can be commercially viable as a taxi. The trial continues and has been enthusiastically supported by passengers.

Mr Watkins said that the NSW Taxi Council had now conducted the rigorous SUTI test for a vehicle to operate as a standard taxi – and the Prius has passed.

The SUTI test determines if vehicles meet the standards comfort and space for passengers.

“That means a Prius can be used as a taxi,” Mr Watkins said.

“I expect to see more and more Prius’ on the road as taxi operators strive to deliver greener options.”

Mr Watkins said that the Government had also changed hire car vehicle specifications to give the public the option to use hybrid vehicles that receive a 5 star rating through the Commonwealth’s Green Vehicle Guide.

“Based on the popularity of the green taxi, I imagine we will see a significant take up of compliant hybrid vehicles in hire car fleets,” Mr Watkins said.

“The lemma Government is strong in its commitment to green public transport, with more than \$120 million provided in the current budget for new green buses, and environmental upgrades to existing buses,” he said.

“This investment in buses alone is estimated to save at least 190 tonnes of greenhouse gasses a year, 170 tonnes of nitrogen oxides and 7 tonnes of particulate emissions.

“Sydney’s taxis were already committed to improving their environmental performance,” Mr Watkins said.

“I congratulate Sydney’s taxi industry for the enthusiasm with which they have embraced green vehicle technologies,” he said.

“Already, nearly all Sydney’s taxis operate on Autogas (LPG), which is 80% cleaner than petrol.

“The trial of the green taxi is still underway, but community feedback has been warm, and demand for green services is expected to grow.”

Mr Watkins said the Government would continue to look for further opportunities to “green” public transport.

*Contact: Russell Mahoney 0407 930 687*