Taxi services are deteriorating in the eyes of users

More than one in two Australians believe that taxi services in their local areas are deteriorating, according to the University's latest quarterly national transport survey, released today.

Only 14 percent of Australians saw an improvement in taxi services in their local areas over the last 12 months, with 79 percent of regular taxi users reporting that they were worse or unchanged.

“We need to rethink regulation of the whole taxi sector, as there are clearly a lot of people who are unhappy with the level of taxi services in their state” says Professor David Hensher, Director of the University of Sydney's Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies (ITLS), who produce the ITLS-Transport Opinion Survey (TOPS).

“One of the major issues in the sector is that the person who owns the registration plates isn’t necessarily the person who drives the vehicles. This means there are a lot of drivers who have just arrived in Australia desperate for a job who don’t speak English or know their way around particularly well. Some of this feedback is anecdotal, but we’re hearing enough of it to suggest it’s fact.”

Victorians, South Australians and Queenslanders experienced lower confidence in taxi services, with only 14 percent, 13 percent and 11 percent of residents reporting that services had improved over the last 12 months.

“With the current taxi inquiry in Melbourne, the survey has really reinforced to us just how negative the public perception of this industry is,” says Professor Hensher, who with the University's Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies has been working with the Victorian government on ways to improve the service as part of the inquiry.

“The reliability of the service, the attitude of drivers and the poor maintenance of vehicles are major concerns in the taxi industry across Australia.”

Confidence in public transport in consumers’ local areas reached its lowest point the nine quarterly surveys since the TOPS project commenced, with a short-term transport confidence index of 86, compared with the previous result of 98 from the fourth quarter of 2011.

“There are a number of reasons for this, including the recent state government changes in NSW and Victoria. These have produced higher expectations for change in transport. While there have been some changes, they are not as great as consumers had hoped,” says Professor Hensher.

The survey also reinforced feedback from last quarter that suggests consumers would prefer funding to concentrate on improving transport within cities rather than between them.

The first national survey to measure transport opinions on a regular basis, TOPS is a reliable indicator of Australians’ ongoing confidence about transport in local area and transport in Australia.

The ITLS in the University of Sydney Business School provides education and conducts research in transport, logistics and supply chain management.
