

# John Castrilli MLA



## Representing the people of Bunbury

On Boxing Day I wrote about the looming termination of wheelchair taxi services in regional WA.

The date threatened by our taxi operators is January 15 and I believe we must keep mounting the pressure on the State Government to heed the industry's valid concerns.

The final warning issued on December 6, by the Country Taxi Operators Association, stated that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Alannah MacTiernan had until January 1 to respond favourably to their requests for a subsidy scheme to make the service viable to provide.

In this worrying case, people with disabilities have become the latest victims of the State Government's city-centric focus which has seen a subsidy scheme set up for Perth wheelchair taxi operators but not their country cousins.

After more than two years lobbying of the State Government, our taxi drivers have rightly had enough of bearing the added costs of providing this critical service.

I know the Minister is aware of this inequity, having personally raised the issue in Parliament with her on several occasions dating back to May, 2006.

The Country Taxi Operators Association had made requests in 2005 but when I raised it in Parliament the following year, she said she was not aware there was an issue.

However since that date – there has been no actions and instead she has sat back until this issue reached crisis point.

Ironically, a subsidy scheme for Perth taxi operators was announced with great fanfare in March last year, however, those operating in regional areas were exempt.

Personally, I find this a disgrace, the Country Taxi Operators feel ignored and disabled residents of regional WA feel neglected.

I call again on the Minister to at long last take urgent action on this issue to prevent stealing even more independence from the lives of people with disabilities.

---

Yesterday, a pioneer of the Bunbury medical community was laid to rest and with him went a big piece of our history.

Having had the privilege of meeting Dr Dermot Foster on many occasions, I believe it's important to reiterate the influence Dr Foster had on the South West community.

His contributions to the health system in Bunbury have been invaluable and immeasurable over his more than 50 years service to the region.

He was instrumental in establishing the St John Ambulance Service in Bunbury and introduced a free public vaccination program.

As the WA Citizen of the Year in 1978 and Order of Australia Recipient in 1991, Dr Foster really was a man for which this community should and does hold on a pedestal.

I extend my sincere condolences to Dr Foster's family, close friends and colleagues on the loss of this truly great man.

[www.johncastrilli.com.au](http://www.johncastrilli.com.au)

Ph: 97913636 Fax: 97913313