

Consumer Submission – Inquiry Into the On-Demand Workforce in Victoria

Prepared by: *Becca [text redacted]*

Impact of on-demand work on the community and consumers

The uptake of consumers accessing services via the on-demand sector demonstrates that the choices and convenience offered have high value to many. The Inquiry invites submissions from consumers, the community and regulators. Answer as many questions as you feel able to. You do not have to answer all questions.

1. What services do you access from the on-demand sector?

I access Shebah – the all-women rideshare.

2. Why do you access services in this way?

Shebah is incredibly convenient and safe. For me, the ‘schedule later’ option whereby you can book rides in advance is the most standout feature. I often know what my schedule will be with a bit of notice, so it’s really helpful to be able to book a trip slightly beforehand and then not worry about it. I also have had negative experiences in the past that lead me to feel far more comfortable with a woman driver. The nature of rideshare involves sharing a confined space with a stranger and relying on them to get you from A to B. While I am anxious about using other rideshares (especially at night), Shebah has been a no-brainer for me.

3. What are the benefits that you feel you experience as a consumer of services via the on-demand economy as opposed to other methods?

Shebah is a part of the demand economy that feels like the furthest thing from it! While I love that rides are on demand and at my convenience through the app, the crazy thing about Shebah is that I can access a beautiful connection on demand. In a Shebah, I experience safety, comfort, warmth, compassion, and an authentically engaging experience. I haven’t experienced this in the same way with other rideshares. With Shebah, drivers show genuine care and concern about your wellbeing, and this simple touch can really affect my day (especially if it’s been a rough one!). It’s different than ordering delivery or making purchases online – it’s investing in my own self care.

4. How do you as a consumer agree to/negotiate the terms and/or conditions of any services purchased, directly with workers, or with platform businesses? Please describe your experience.

I agreed to the terms and conditions upon signing up with Shebah. What I like about this service is there isn't actually any negotiation with drivers about prices, as it's all handled within the app. It's great to be able to engage fully with the driver (or even just relax and enjoy some silence) without thinking about how much the trip will cost and what route she's taking. I receive a fare estimate beforehand, so I know what to expect. Also, all the rules are featured in the FAQs that you can find in the app, so it's pretty simple to navigate.

5. What do you do if the services are not of an acceptable quality and how successful have you been in accessing compensation or another remedy as a result of sub-standard services being delivered?

Once, I was in a Shebah and Google Maps led us to almost my exact destination, but on the bridge just above it! So we had to go all the way around and circle back. My driver was extremely apologetic even though it wasn't her fault at all (GPS error, not hers, drivers just follow the GPS), and she assured me she'd sort the price out with head office. I ended up calling in to head office just to be safe, and they told me my driver Judi had already gotten in contact with them and told them to refund \$15 of the fare. I was really relieved and impressed that Judi did exactly what she said she would do. Also, the women at head office were very friendly, upbeat, and warm which I enjoyed. It was amazing to speak to people with personalities instead of a robot. They seemed really keen to sort everything out for me.

6. What options do you feel that you have as a consumer if you suffer any harm when on-demand services are being provided to you or for your benefit?

Luckily with Shebah I feel very safe from harm. But, because accessing this service involves spending time in traffic, you never know what could happen (eg. other cars). I do know that Shebah is strict about insurance and all the drivers have very comprehensive insurance. I know that if anything happened, it would be covered. I also feel confident that head office would be extremely supportive and hands on.

I also feel fortunate that when talking about *harm* when accessing this on-demand service, I do not have to consider the threat of sexual/physical/verbal violence or harassment. These are things that I am (rightfully) tentative of in my everyday life, but with Shebah I get to let go of that fear for the duration that I'm in the car.

7. In your experience, does the way that on-demand work is completed create any risks to the safety of Victorians, either directly as users of services or indirectly?

No, not at all. I think it's great that when you pair with a driver you can see her photo, a photo of her car, her rego, and you even have access to her phone number. You're able to discuss access needs, and you can put a face to the name of the person who will be transporting you. She can also see a profile photo of passengers, which I think is really crucial too. As learned from my many deep & meaningfuls with drivers, so many of them came from dangerous backgrounds. They've experienced domestic violence, sexual violence, racism, intolerance, etc. and Shebah has given them an opportunity to become self-empowered. That empowerment is really contagious.

Additional Feedback

I love the on-demand sector because it is really conducive with my lifestyle. I like to get things in order and then be done with them. I like to have access to services at my fingertips (can you tell I'm a Millennial?). But what I like most is that Shebah has humanized the on-demand sector, and put safety at its centre.