The Territory’s commercial passenger vehicle (CPV) industry is headed for a shakeup after the Government released a discussion paper on the industry today.

Transport and Infrastructure Minister Kon Vatskalis said the paper represents a "radical re-cast" of the industry and comes after the complete failure of the previous Government's deregulation.

Mr Vatskalis said the Government is expecting opposition to the discussion paper.

"While it is a discussion paper and there will be one-month submission period before it goes to Cabinet, I am expecting it will not be welcomed by some," he said.

"But the industry needs to be revamped, the CLP's deregulation has had a detrimental effect on the quality of the service and has reduced industry incomes as well as causing ongoing disputes between sectors of the industry.

"This Government is committed to seeing the Territory’s commercial passenger vehicle industry return to efficient and profitable operation and I believe the recommendations contained in the discussion paper are the right way to go."

Mr Vatskalis said the discussion paper recommends changes to the various sectors of the industry, including establishing a Northern Territory CPV Board.

"The Board will guide the direction of the industry, oversee reforms to the industry, administer regulations for taxis, minibuses and private hire cars and ensure all interests are adequately represented in ongoing industry development," Mr Vatskalis said.

"The Board will include representatives from each of the industry sectors, community user groups (including disability advocacy organisations), the tourism industry, drivers and consumers. I will appoint an independent chair and the Board will be assisted by an executive officer - a permanent public servant - and other staff as required."

An interim CPV Board will be appointed until legislation for a permanent CPV Board is developed.

Mr Vatskalis said the discussion paper proposes a rearrangement of several key aspects of each sector of the industry.

Minibuses:

- it is proposed to give minibus operators the right to respond to hails in the street;
- minibuses to continue to operate without meters;
- minibuses and taxis to pay the same annual licence fee ($16,000 in Darwin, different in other areas);
- maximum fare per passenger to be based on a zonal system similar to public bus fare zoning practices and fares to destinations outside of regulated zones to be negotiable. Maximum fare
structure to be approved by the Minister following CPV Board recommendations;

- all minibuses (excluding replacement vehicles) to be required to operate a minimum of 100 hours per week.

**Taxis:**

- it is proposed taxis will continue to operate with meters;
- taxis and minibuses to pay the same annual licence fee on the basis they have access to similar markets;
- maximum fare structure to be approved by the Minister following CPV Board recommendations;
- maximum fares to be displayed prominently displayed to clients;
- fares to destinations outside of regulated zones to be negotiable;
- all taxis (excluding replacement vehicles) to be required to operate for a minimum of 100 hours per week.

**Public access private hire cars:**

- it is proposed public access private hire cars operate from authorised base and from private hire car ranks at airports, hotels and casinos;
- do not need to return to base between hiring;
- to be not permitted to take hails from the street;
- no meters but fare schedule to be at least 30 per cent higher than for equivalent taxi service;
- licence fee of $4000 per year.

**Special function private hire vehicles** (category includes vehicles not in previous categories such as vintage cars and similar vehicles which operate only for special functions such as weddings):

- associated fee of $500 per year.

**Courtesey cars:**

- it is proposed all courtesy cars used by hotels and tourist operations to be specifically licenced;
- licence fee of $200 per year;
- all other courtesy-type vehicles including those operated by garages, creches etc to be subject to existing conditions.

Mr Vatskalis said the CPV Board will also provide advice to the Government on industry response times (including benchmarks for disabled access), general service standards relative to industry benchmarks, seasonal demands and the size and composition of the industry.

"Licences for extra vehicles may be issued to meet seasonal demand and major events," Mr Vatskalis said.

"It will also establish an initial minimum objective of 10 per cent of the fleet as disabled access taxis."

Mr Vatskalis also said the Board would have responsibility for entry standards for drivers.
"It is proposed that all future drivers must complete a two-stage assessment, preliminary assessment as ‘fit and proper’ and full accreditation as a taxi, minibus or private hire car driver," Mr Vatskalis said.

"All future drivers will also be required to have held a standard car driver's licence for a minimum of five years before they can be considered for accreditation."

Mr Vatskalis said minor regulatory requirements such as vehicle types and cosmetics, driver uniforms and advertising on vehicles currently enforced by regulation through the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment will be rearranged to maximise self-regulation.

And he said while the provision of ranks is the responsibility of local government, the Development Consent Authority and other relevant stakeholders such as airports and shopping centre operators, it is proposed a small working group of the CPV Board be set up with representation from these groups to ensure sufficient ranks are available.

He said it is also proposed to make NT Government Public Transport bus stops available for ranking purposes outside of normal bus hours, with substantial penalties for any misuse by the industry or the public.