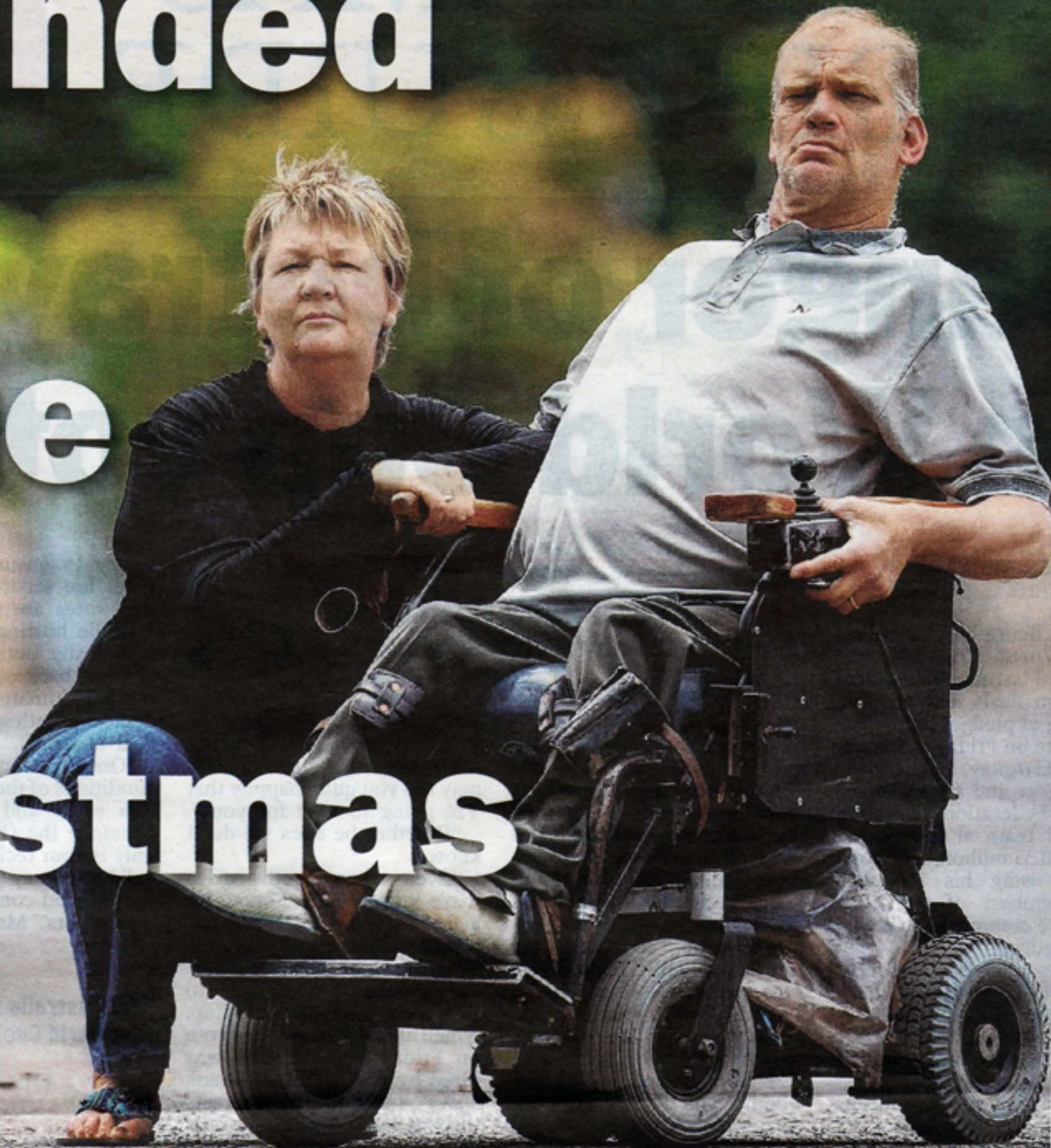


# Stranded at home for Christmas



**ACCESS NEEDED:** Jill Fowler and Trevor Harrison say there aren't enough Access Taxis to meet demand.

Picture: MA

TAXIS with wheelchair access in Adelaide are already booked out for Christmas Day, potentially leaving hundreds of customers stranded and unable to attend family celebrations.

When *The Advertiser* inquired about booking an Adelaide Access Taxi for Christmas Day, it was told none were available after 8am.

The operator, which runs a 90-car fleet servicing people with a disability, suggested calling back in December in case of cancellations.

Access Taxi management has since denied it is booked out, saying some time slots were full, but customers



**DAVID JEAN**

would be offered other times. Dignity for Disability MP Kelly Vincent said several constituents had complained to her about being unable to book an accessible taxi for Christmas, despite having contacted Access more than a month early.

Ms Vincent said this highlighted a shortage of wheelchair-accessible taxis, which number less than 10

per cent of Adelaide's 950-car fleet. Access Taxis has more than 7500 registered users.

Ms Vincent called on Transport Minister Patrick Conlon to ensure more taxis were equipped to carry people with disabilities.

"For the majority who use wheelchairs, particularly those who receive the disability support pension as their sole income source, it can be extremely difficult, even impossible, to use regular cars, trains or buses," she said.

"The lack of accessible taxis mean that many wheelchair users will simply not be spending Christmas with their families and friends."

Trevor Harrison, who suffers from cerebral palsy, requires an electric wheelchair to get around. His wife Jill Fowler said getting an accessible cab during busy times was extremely difficult.

"You can never guarantee you can get a bus home," she said. "So taxis are the way to go, but it's a problem getting them. They're often booked out."

"Non-disabled people don't have to book three months in advance to have a meal with their family on Christmas."

The number of accessible taxi licences has increased by 20 since the 2007-08 financial year. Ms Vincent said the

number of licences Australia had increased per cent in the past years, while the number of people registered as mobility-related taxers had increased 10 per cent in that time.

Mr Conlon referred *The Advertiser's* inquiry to Access Taxis.

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