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TAXITALK

MAGAZINE

Official journal of the Victorian Taxi Association
Print Post Approved number PP328444/0004 Issue Number 532

JUNE 2012



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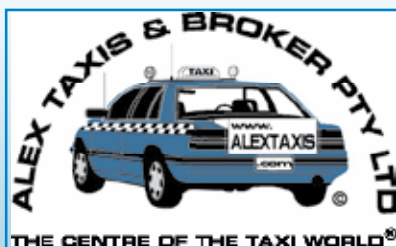


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Taxi inquiry draft report

Iwould expect that by the time this edition of *Taxi Talk* hits the streets, the Taxi Industry Inquiry will have released its draft report for public comment.

Importantly, this long awaited report is a trigger for all sectors of the industry to examine what the Inquiry believes it has found and its recommendations for reform.

I urge all networks, operators, drivers and licence holders to have their say. In so doing, don't just look at the short term - also look at the longer term for the sake of industry viability and sustainability.

Your say will be invited by the Inquiry through further consultation and submissions. It is also expected that the Inquiry will hold information presentations for industry stakeholders so please take the opportunity to attend these.

It goes without saying that the VTA, with the assistance of its advisers, will be responding to the report.

I remind readers that VTA submissions to the Inquiry, the VTA pillars of reform and the VTA customer survey can be found on the VTA website www.victaxi.com.au. ❀



Neil Sach VTA CEO

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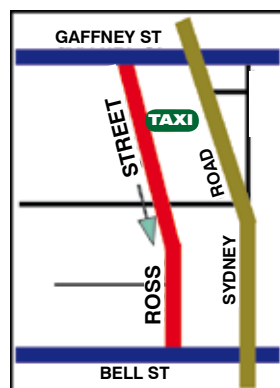
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◀ INQUIRY REPORT ▶

new research findings have been released

The Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) has released new data underlining the important role that booking companies play in Victoria's taxi industry.

VTA spokesman David Samuel said research, conducted by leading polling company Auspol, had shown that 79 per cent of respondents believe two central phone numbers made it easier to access a taxi in Melbourne.

"With days to go until the release of draft recommendations by Victoria's Taxi Industry Inquiry, it's important that we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. We acknowledge that significant reforms are required to correct issues with the taxi industry but these should be practical and should acknowledge the things that work well already," Mr Samuel said.

"Draft recommendations leaked to the media have hinted at criticism of taxi booking companies. While, it would be beneficial to view these comments within the complete context of Professor Fels' report, they do not stack up against research conducted

by Auspol and survey results from the Department of Transport (DOT)."

"DOT survey data, obtained by VTA under Freedom of Information, shows customer satisfaction with booking companies sits at an average of 72 per cent, making it one the highest scoring components of the survey."

"Further, research conducted by IPSOS for the Taxi Industry Inquiry showed that the most common primary method for accessing taxis was by phone booking. This result corresponds with a similar high result from the 2008 Essential Service Commission (ESC) report which showed that phone bookings accounted for approximately 50 per cent of the market."

"Booking companies play an important role in the provision of taxi services in Victoria. They make a significant contribution to driver and passenger safety and facilitate getting customers from point to point."

"They have an equally important role to play in improving taxi service standards. The VTA wants

to see responsibility for standards returned to the industry. Improving customer service outcomes is about ensuring the right behaviour is encouraged and the wrong behaviour is addressed," Mr Samuel concluded.

The next short film in the VTA's 'Everyday Cabbies' series has been released and focusses on the role of taxi booking companies. It is available at www.youtube.com/EverydayCabbies.

The entire Auspol report is available on the association's website at <http://www.victaxi.com.au>. Other Auspol findings included:

- 92-96 per cent would prefer better regulations rather than deregulation of the taxi industry.
- Almost 70 per cent of Victorians are opposed to a variable fare structure.
- 73 per cent of respondents believed the taxi service in Victoria was either better than, or as good as, the taxi service in other States or Territories. ♣

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Chefs' Charity Cup 2012

Melbourne's leading chefs will be defending their reputations out of the kitchen as a part of the Starlight Chefs' Charity Cup on Saturday 2 June.

For the first time, the Starlight Chefs' Charity Cup will be held as a part of the Good Food and Wine Show.

Preparations are underway to transform the indoor exhibition space into a functioning soccer pitch for the first time – complete with two inflatable fields, Captain Starlight commentary, and fun football activities on the sideline with Melbourne Victory players.

Melbourne's best restaurants, including Vue de Monde, Made Establishment (The Press Club, Maha), Mamasita, Fenix, Coda Bar & Restaurant, The Point, Enoteca Sileno Restaurant, D.O.C Carlton and Atlantic

Group [v] have confirmed they will field teams.

"We will happily show the new teams how it's done, while raising money for the Starlight Children's Foundation. The rivalry between us may be friendly, but we all want to win!" said George Calombaris, from The Press Club and MasterChef judge.

The funds raised enable Starlight to brighten the lives of seriously ill and hospitalised children, young people and their families. Donations can be made online via www.chefscharitycup.com.au

Date: Saturday 2 June 2012 10am – 4pm

Location: Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre ❀

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This year's Show has all the ingredients for a fun day out, so make sure you check out their website (www.mcec.com.au) to see what's on. ❀



DAVID SAMUEL

VTA Policy and Communications

A story in the Age Newspaper on Saturday 12 May addressed the important issue of taxi insurance.

The VTA wrote to the Inquiry last year on this matter and raised its concerns with the difficulty many taxi operators/drivers have in accessing insurance and their increasing reliance on groups known as “taxi clubs”.

The letter states: Uninsured or inappropriately insured vehicles are a burden to the Industry and the community. A lack of genuine insurance options for taxi operators creates numerous issues and has a flow on affect to bailee drivers, particularly where the bailment agreement fails to provide any level of indemnity for the driver.

The VTA looks forward to seeing what the Taxi Industry Inquiry have to say about this matter as part of their upcoming draft recommendations.

David Samuel

VTA Policy and Communications



THE AGE ARTICLE

MAY 13, 2012

Taxi clubs proving rank for drivers, says report

Taxi drivers have become Australia's new class of “working poor”, with rogue operators systematically defrauding them and putting many at risk of lawsuits from other road users.

As a shake-up of Victoria's taxi industry looms, new research has found countless drivers are being ripped off by taxi clubs, which are meant to provide them with accident cover but instead leave them with unpaid insurance bills.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres, which wrote the report, says many drivers earn less than \$10 an hour, have few entitlements, and are often exploited by their bosses.

In one case, a driver who hit a woman's car was assured by his taxi club that he was properly insured. A year later, the driver was taken to court by the woman's insurer because his taxi club had failed to cover the \$25,000 worth of repairs.

“Taxi clubs purport to offer a limited form of ‘insurance’ to taxi drivers, although in many cases, taxi drivers obtain very little benefit from the membership of these clubs,” the report says. “In our view, these drivers represent a new and disturbing category of the ‘working poor’ in Australia.”

The report was based on a legal clinic set up by the federation to deal with taxi driver complaints. Between February

and November last year, the clinic took 169 cases relating to drivers' fines, disciplinary matters and car accidents.

It said legal problems experienced by taxi drivers arise from their status as "bailees" - non-owner drivers - which gives them "none of the benefits that employees take for granted, such as minimum wages, sick leave, holiday leave, occupational health and safety training, and rights against unfair dismissal".

The report recommends that the Baillieu government:

- Introduces new laws ensuring drivers have the same entitlements as employees.
- Follows the lead of New South Wales by introducing compulsory comprehensive insurance to the taxi industry.

- Conducts a statewide audit of taxi clubs to stamp out dodgy operators.
- Provides drivers whose first language is not English with translated material about road rules, workplace guidelines & City Link instructions.

The findings come as the government awaits the conclusion of an inquiry into the state's taxi industry. Headed by former consumer watchdog Allan Fels, the investigation is expected to pave the way for dramatic improvements in the industry.

Prof. Fels said taxi drivers were "a key to improving taxi standards". However, their average wage of \$13 an hour "has bad effects on their motivation, their long-term commitment to the taxi industry and dedication to their customers".

Farrah Tomazin ✪



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◀ TRANSPORT CONGRESS ▶

to be held in Melbourne in 2016

Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher and Minister for Public Transport and Roads Terry Mulder have announced that Melbourne has won the right to host the prestigious Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) World Congress in October 2016.

Expected to attract more than 5000 delegates to the city and generate more than \$23.5 million for Victoria, the large-scale trade exhibition and conference will be held over five days at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Hosting the Congress here in Melbourne will provide an opportunity to showcase the latest technical developments to a global audience, with delegates including private corporations, public agencies and academic institutions involved in the research, design and

implementation of new technologies across all modes of transport.

Intelligent Transport System (ITS) technologies include communication, data processing and electronic technologies for in-vehicle, vehicle-to-vehicle, vehicle-to-infrastructure and mode-to-mode systems that increase transport safety and mobility, improve the sustainability of travel, reduce congestion, and improve the performance and competitiveness of all modes of transport.

Mr Mulder said the large Congress would give Melbourne the chance to showcase some of its advanced ITS initiatives, including the radio break-in railway level crossing safety program, adaptive traffic control systems, priority signalling for road-based public transport vehicles, electronic tolling and

freeway management and information systems to reduce delays due to traffic incidents.

Local host organisation, ITS Australia, is the country's only organisation focused on facilitating the development and deployment of advanced technologies across all modes of transport – air, sea, road and rail.

ITS Australia President Brian Negus said he was delighted with the support for the Melbourne Congress bid offered by international colleagues.

"The support of the ITS industry in Asia-Pacific, the Americas and in Europe was particularly pleasing. This global input and the support of the Victorian Government were critical elements in our success," Mr Negus said. ❀



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The first week of May, the All Star Cabbies launched into action. Six drivers gave lucky passengers a free trip, while talking about the values the VTA consider vital to the Victorian taxi industry. The drivers, Rod, Sherma, Jama, Taran, Amrin and Ricardo, were selected from across the fleet and drive a range of vehicles.

During the normal course of their working days, we asked them to offer free rides (the VTA picked up the tab) and let their passengers know that if the reforms proposed by the VTA are adopted by the Government, they will deliver an even better service for taxi drivers and fairer outcome for taxi drivers and operators.

The VTA's model details the industry's solutions to key issues including:

1. Passenger service and safety: Hand control for satisfaction back to industry through a Taxi Industry Accreditation Scheme. There is 1 complaint for every 9000 cab trips in Victoria. That's a low figure but we can do better.
2. Driver training: Introduce a 12

month probationary period for new drivers with additional training sessions every 3 months and expand the successful regional Victoria mentoring program to Melbourne.

3. Licensing: Cap exorbitant licence lease fees - including those charged by the Victorian Government, which holds almost 25 per cent of the state's licences. Link lease prices to car earnings to stabilise industry costs. Require future licence purchasers to operate the taxi themselves. Issue no new licences until occupancy rates, currently sitting at 30 per cent of each shift, increase.
4. Fare setting: Victorian fares are 30 per cent below those in NSW and Queensland. Fares should be restructured with a higher flagfall and lower distance charges to discourage short fare refusal and encourage longer trips. Fares should be reviewed annually by the Taxi Services Commission to ensure they adequately reflect the cost of running the vehicle.

5. Driver remuneration and safety: Recognise the link between good service and fair earnings. Turn taxi driving back into a career by enforcing a minimum 50/50 revenue split between the driver and the licence operator. Recognise that Primary Network Service Providers are the key to driver safety because they monitor all taxi movements in real time.

"The free ride program is a positive way to make taxi customers think about the issues facing the industry and the right way to improve services", said VTA spokesman David Samuel.

With close to 300 trips, many passengers talked with the All Star Cabbies and had great conversations about the industry - listening actively to the ideas we have about reform and contributing good ideas. The feedback via twitter and direct to the VTA was fantastic.

We'd like to thank the All Star Cabbies. We know there are many, many All Star Cabbies in the fleet, so thanks to you all too and keep up the good work! ♣

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**Number of Taxi
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| | |
|---|--------------|
| METROPOLITAN | 4,345 |
| (including 517 WAT vehicles) | |
| COUNTRY | 507 |
| (including 112WAT vehicles) | |
| OUTER SUBURBAN | 161 |
| (including 34 WAT vehicles) | |
| URBAN | 243 |
| (Ballarat - Bendigo - Geelong) (including 38 WAT vehicles) | |
| TOTAL | 5,256 |
| (including 701 WAT vehicles) | |

NUMBER OF DRIVERS

| | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Active drivers | 16,000 APPROX |
| Accredited drivers | 25,000 APPROX |

Compliance
outcomes (1-30 April 2012)

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Taxi Inspections | 1,749 |
| Rectification Notices | 378 |
| Infringement Notices | 134 |
| Notices of Unroadworthiness | 15 |
| Official Warnings | 42 |

ASSIGNMENTS

| | |
|-------------|----|
| metro taxis | 64 |
|-------------|----|

LICENCE TRANSFERS

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| metro taxis | 10 |
| urban | 0 |
| country taxis | 0 |
| hire car licences | 11 |
| special licences | 1 |

LICENCES ISSUED

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| taxi licences | 0 |
| hire car licences | 1 |
| special vehicles | 3 |
| RH vehicles | 3 |

**LICENCES TRADED BY
ASSIGNMENT = 921**

(April 2011 - April 2012)

**Number of
Victorian Hire Vehicle
Licences** April 2012

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Metropolitan Hire Cars | 905 |
| Country Hire Cars | 79 |
| Special Purpose Vehicles | 968 |
| Restricted Hire Cars | 708 |

TOTAL **2,660**

\$55,572

avg metro licence transfer value

CALENDAR



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Course 210 Day 1 Monday 9 July
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Day 3 Wednesday 11 July



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◀ GREEN TAXICABS ▶

New York is getting apple green cabs, literally

New Yorkers have been trying to describe the color of the new taxis for the outer boroughs. Mayor Michael Bloomberg says it's "apple green." David Yassky, the taxi and limousine commissioner, calls it mint, instead of Shrek or bile or sea-foam green.

This light-ish, lime-ish green, as it turned out, was about the only color left for official city vehicles. Red is best for firetrucks; blue is mostly reserved for the police. Orange wouldn't work because, as Mr. Yassky explained, it is hard to get an orange that doesn't look like yellow in some light. Black is mostly for limos and hearses. Forget white or gray; those are the favorite colors for private vehicles (which could cause confusion). So green it is.

The first of these 18,000 cabs should start appearing on the streets in June. Under an agreement worked out in Albany last year, the new cabs will not be allowed to pick up customers in most of Manhat-



tan or at the city airports. Those areas will be exclusively yellow cab territory for pickups. If the city moves rapidly, up to 6,000 of the new verdurous taxis will be on the streets by the end of the year, with 20 percent of them outfitted especially for the disabled.

The green taxis are still controversial in the yellow cab world. The Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade, which represents the yellow cab industry, has filed suit arguing that their million-dollar medallions give them the exclusive right to operate in the city. The problem is that they can't be easily found everywhere (just ask anybody in the Bronx or Queens). For millions of New Yorkers outside Manhattan, the green cabs will be a welcome sight.

New York Times ❀

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Pre-arranged transport

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides eligible veterans and war widows a range of transport options to travel to and from their medical treatment. Each year more than 1 million trips are funded by DVA at a cost of about \$52 million.

With this volume of work, the taxi industry is integral to making this a successful service. Veterans and war widows are a very special group of people who should be given the respect, courtesy and acknowledgement of the contribution and sacrifices they or their spouse made in defence of the nation. Many DVA clients who rely on this service are old, frail and are generally needing assistance with

travelling. They expect and deserve a higher level of service from drivers when travelling in taxis.

Most veterans and war widows are able to book their own transport directly with taxi companies for travel to and from their medical appointments and will pay the driver and then seek reimbursement of their fares later from DVA. However, the bulk of travel is pre-arranged by DVA and this service is known as Booked Car With Driver (BCWD). DVA pay the fares for BCWD jobs as part of a corporate contract arrangement with networks and operators.

It can be confusing at times for drivers as to how they will be paid for their service. In most cases, this can be as simple as confirming

with the veteran or war widow prior to commencing the journey whether the trip is covered under BCWD or if they intend to seek reimbursement. In most cases BCWD jobs are broadcast as "DVA Contract" jobs which means that DVA will pay the fare.

If at anytime there is doubt about who pays, please seek clarification from your base. For contract work, DVA pays the networks and operators directly for BCWD journeys and veterans and war widows should not be asked for payment by drivers. If a passenger says that this is a Veterans' Affairs job you should contact your base who will have instructions on how to proceed – in most cases the response will be fill in a "docket" and we will seek approval from DVA at a later date.

DVA receives about 3,000 calls daily to book travel for treatment. These bookings are recorded and are passed to the appropriate contracted network or operator, the majority are issued the day prior to travel. The network or operator has the responsibility to dispatch the jobs at the appropriate time to ensure the veteran or war widow arrives at their medical appointment on time. The consequence of arriving late is that critical medical treatment may be missed and another appointment may not be available for months.

If you are transporting veterans or war widows to their medical appointment:



- BCWD jobs are normally identified as part of the dispatch process as a "DVA contract booking"
- BCWD is a door to door service for special needs people. Don't honk your horn in the driveway. Many using the service will have hearing difficulties and may not be able to hear the horn. Please exit the vehicle and knock on the front door. More often the person probably requires assistance to the vehicle, entering the vehicle and with the seat belt.
- If they have a collapsible wheelchair or walking frame they will rely on you to put it in the boot.
- Confirm who they are and the destination and appointment time.
- For BCWD jobs, DVA will pay. Under no circumstances

should the veteran or war widow be asked to pay.

- If you require a docket to be signed then please ensure it is filled in. Veterans and war widows become quite anxious when asked to sign blank dockets. Dockets are no longer required by DVA for those vehicles/operators using MT Data.
- Arrive as close as possible to where the drop off is without breaching the road laws but be mindful of the safety of the veteran or war widow. Please offer assistance such as opening the door, as many suffer from poor mobility and may require help to enter and exit the taxi.
- For the return journey, the veteran or war widow may not know which taxi is specifically theirs, especially if they are at

a large medical facility. You may need to leave your vehicle to seek and identify the client and to assist them to the vehicle.

DVA appreciates the commitment by the Victorian taxi industry for its efforts in transporting Australia's war veterans and war widows.

Some extra care and understanding of the special needs of this group and some common courtesy and respect for the elderly goes a long way in raising the profile and image of taxi drivers and this can be rewarded with more work from DVA.

If you would like additional information about how you can provide a better service to Australia's war veterans and war widows, or are interested in doing DVA jobs, please contact your taxi network.

More information about DVA Transport, including guidelines for transport operators, is available at http://www.dva.gov.au/service_providers/Pages/booked_car_scheme.aspx. ❀

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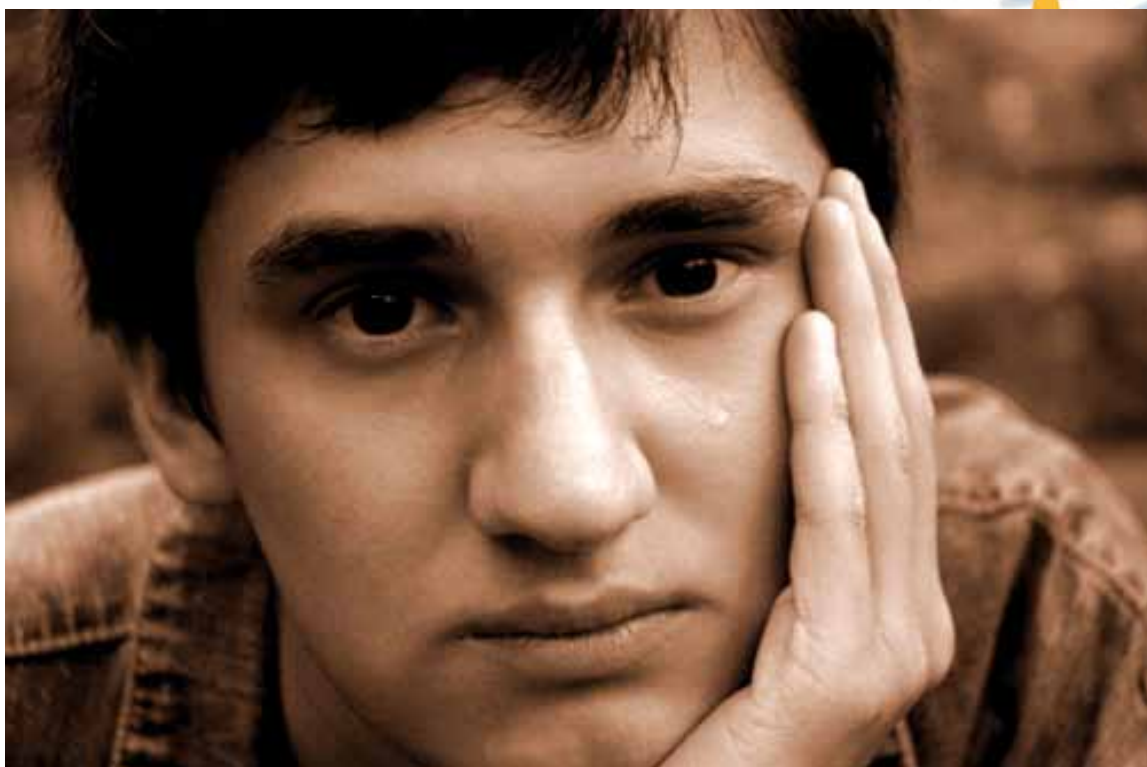
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Australians ... **LIFT YOUR GAME!**



in my shoes

your voice, helping to wipe out discrimination



New research by beyondblue shows around one-third of Australians discriminate against gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex (GLBTI) people and it's time it stopped.

Research shows that over 40% of GLBT Australians have had to hide their sexuality or gender identity in public for fear of violence or discrimination. Same-sex attracted people are twice as likely (31.5%) to experience anxiety than the heterosexual population (14.1%) – and three times as likely to experience depression (19.2%) compared to the heterosexual population (6%).

beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO says that “as a nation, we should be very concerned that the actions of so many Australians are contributing to significant levels of depression and anxiety – and even suicide - amongst GLBTI people. It's essential that people who continue to discriminate realise their actions are causing real harm.

“This is why beyondblue, with the Movember Foundation, has committed \$3 million to reduce discrimination and promote better mental health outcomes for people

in the GLBTI community.

“\$1.5 million has been allocated to develop a national awareness and anti-discrimination media campaign which will be launched in a few months,” she says.

To ensure the campaign accurately reflects the experiences of GLBTI people, beyondblue recently conducted an online community consultation In My Shoes which reinforced other research showing that discrimination against GLBTI people is widespread and contributes to higher rates of anxiety and depression, than in the wider community.

Chairman of beyondblue The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC says beyondblue has gathered the research and is working collaboratively with GLBTI community leaders to develop the campaign.

“We know that gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people experience discrimination, but I am particularly concerned about the wellbeing of young GLBTI people at school who report exceptionally high levels of psychological distress.

“The In My Shoes consultation confirmed that discrimination,

bullying and harassment are particularly damaging during school years. Exposure to negative attitudes and derogatory comments are hurtful and can inhibit the development of a young person's positive self-image.

We don't want people to feel they have to hide their sexuality or gender identity because they fear violence or discrimination.

“Things need to change. We want everyone in Australia to ask themselves if their attitudes, behaviour or the words they use could be discriminatory and contribute to very serious mental health problems for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex people,” he said.

beyondblue has also recently released a position statement – Depression and Anxiety in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex populations.

Kate Carnell says: “The position statement beyondblue has released, in consultation with GLBTI community leaders, has drawn together the best available research and information which will form the basis of beyondblue's advocacy in this area.”

Position Statement Overview

beyondblue celebrates diversity and promotes social inclusion and equal opportunity in its programs, research and resources. beyondblue believes that no one should be excluded or discriminated against because of their gender, sex or sexuality. Everyone has a right to access safe health care services that affirms every individual's personal identity. beyondblue recognises that same sex attraction, sex and gender diversity are within the usual range of human sexual orientation and characteristics.

Position Statement Stats and facts

- The large majority of Australians do not hold homophobic beliefs or attitudes, but a large minority (about 35%) do.
- Same-sex attracted (SSA) women are more likely than heterosexual women to experience depression during their lifetime.
- SSA men are much more likely to report an experience of depression in the last 12 months than heterosexual men.
- Both-sex attracted people have significantly higher incidence of mental illness than homosexual or heterosexual people.
- High rates of depression (50-60%) were found in an Australian survey of trans people.
- The most common place for young people to face homophobic abuse and discrimination is at school.

To read a summary of In My Shoes or to find out more about the beyondblue/ GLBTI Reference Group, beyondblue-funded GLBTI research and programs, go to www.beyondblue.org.au/glbti

beyondblue info line 1300 22 4636 – www.beyondblue.org.au ❀

◀ HEART ATTACKS ▶

act in time to heart attack signs

With heart attack responsible for one death every 51 minutes and over half of all heart attack deaths occurring before the person reaches the hospital, it's an important health message and one the Heart Foundation is not taking lightly.

Delays can cost lives, and for heart attack survivors there is only a small window of opportunity to act before damage to the heart muscle occurs, resulting in permanent disability.

Being aware of the warning signs and knowing what to do in the event of a heart attack could save your life or the life of a loved one. It really is the best gift you could give someone and can mean the difference between life and death.

There are many types of heart conditions. Review the symptoms, diagnoses, treatments and management strategies for some of the more common heart conditions below.

Heart attack

A heart attack happens when there is a sudden blockage to an artery that supplies blood to an area of your heart.

Heart failure

Heart failure occurs when the heart muscle has become too weak to pump blood through the body as effectively as normal.

Coronary heart disease

Coronary heart disease is the most common cause of death in Australia. It is also a major cause of disability, with many people reporting problems or needing assistance with daily activities.

Deep vein thrombosis

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot in one of the deep veins of your body, usually in your leg.

Atrial fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation is one of a number of disorders commonly referred to as 'arrhythmias', where your heart does not beat normally.

Familial

hypercholesterolaemia

Familial hypercholesterolaemia is an inherited condition in which your body doesn't remove enough cholesterol from the blood. This causes high total blood cholesterol levels and early onset of coronary heart disease in some families.

High blood pressure

High blood pressure (also known as Hypertension) is the pressure of your blood in your arteries as the heart pumps it around your body.



Palpitations

Heart palpitations are an awareness of your heartbeat.

Angina

Angina is chest pain or discomfort caused by insufficient blood flow and oxygen to the muscle of the heart.

Coronary artery spasm

Coronary artery spasm is a temporary discomfort or pain that is caused by a temporary spasm in one or more of your coronary arteries.

Warning Signs of Heart Attack:



Heart attack symptoms may include

- pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness in one or more parts of the upper body (chest, neck, jaw, arm(s), shoulder(s) or back)

in combination with other symptoms of

- nausea
- shortness of breath
- dizziness or a cold sweat.

People who have had a heart attack describe a feeling of being generally unwell or 'not quite right'. Each can be a clear warning that the person is about to have a heart attack and needs to act fast. ❀



Gordon Murrell

22 March 1925 - 8 May 2012

Gordon first entered the taxi industry in 1964 as a taxi driver in Geelong with Pivot Taxis.

Gordon had the vision to see what a valuable service the taxi industry was to the Geelong community.


As the years progressed he became involved as a Board Member of Pivot Taxis that amalgamated with Cream and Green Taxis which then became Geelong Radio Cabs Co-operative Limited (GRC).

For many years Gordon remained on the Board of GRC and was elected as Chairman and also as the representative of GRC on the Council of the Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) at the same time growing his taxi business with the assistance of his family.

Gordon held 74 taxi licences and was awarded the VTA "Gold Cufflinks" in March 2007.

Gordon was admired for many years as the "quiet and gracious gentleman that got things done".

He will be sadly missed by Pamela, Lynette and Daryl and their families and many people of the Victorian taxi industry. ❀



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New mobile website for crime

Crime Stoppers Victoria has a new website - Mobile Tip Submit.

The new platform is a mobile version of the current website which will allow the public to upload photos and make reports through simple drop down menus.

A rise in the number of online reports and growth in smart phone and tablet technology led Crime Stoppers to launch the mobile website.

Crime Stoppers Acting Chair Samantha Hunter said there had been a steady rise in the number of public tip-offs online.

"The number of online reports in the month of January has more than doubled on the Crime Stoppers website since 2009," she said.

Crime Stoppers helps solve a crime every 14 minutes somewhere in the world, thanks to a vigilant community.


Ms Hunter said there was a wealth of untapped community information out there.

"We need the eyes and ears of the community, to make Australia a safer place. You, the community are the first line of defence and your best weapon is the phone or computer, see something, hear something, report it," she said.

Reports on the mobile website are confidential.

To access Crime Stoppers Victoria's new mobile website on a hand-held device visit www.vic.crimestoppers.com.au and from a desktop computer visit <http://m.crimestoppers.com.au>. ♦

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◀ DEEP PURPLE TAXIS ▶

Azerbaijan upgrades its unlicensed fleet

Coventry, England—In a brick complex here behind a Mini Cooper dealership and across from a McDonald's, a small auto maker's staff is working full tilt to satisfy a determined customer: the president of Azerbaijan.

This is the headquarters of London Taxi Co., the car manufacturer that produces the British capital's iconic black cabs, known for famed bubble tops and spacious passenger areas with facing seats. These days, Azerbaijan, a faraway country known for caviar and petroleum, if it is known at all, has become the taxi maker's comrade in arms.

Azerbaijan is the largest country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia.

The former Soviet republic is London Taxis biggest single customer. It has bought 1,000 London cabs in recent months and is planning to order about 3,000 more.

Behind the purchases is a grandiose ambition rising on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, and other Azerbaijani officials want to wow visitors by replicating London's

taxi force in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku—substituting English sophistication for the dilapidated unlicensed cabs that have plied the city for decades.

Baku's new street style will be showcased later this month when the city plays host to the wildly popular Eurovision Song Contest, in which countries across Europe submit a song to be performed in competition on international television.

Now, as euro-pop fanatics descend on Baku, Azerbaijan will show off cultural jewels such as bubbling mud volcanoes and natural-gas fire pits. It also wants to put its new English-style taxi fleet front and center.

For decades, Baku and other former-Soviet capitals have been dominated by unmarked, unlicensed cabs that dwellers hail like hitchhikers. The cars are mostly old, cheap Russian-made vehicles resembling toaster ovens on wheels. Passengers endure a fare negotiation that is based on everything from a journey's distance to the passenger's good looks.

Starting May 1, however, Azerbaijan officially banned all Russian-made cars from serving as taxis in Baku. Rising instead is Azerbaijan's dream of becoming a country with a metered taxi service.

London taxis are designed to be commodious to an English gentleman's top hat in the back seat and a trans-Atlantic steamship chest in the trunk. The driver also has a secret pedal that locks the doors. The ones shipped to Azerbaijan were made in China.

In Azerbaijan, the grand unveiling of the new taxis came last year, when the new Baku Taxi Co. LLC displayed the first batch along the Caspian waterfront, beneath a monolithic Soviet-era government palace. The cars were the color of eggplant - purple.

The aubergine hue was apparently Mr. Aliyev's doing. "Mr. President likes them personally," Azerbaijan's transport minister, Zia Mamedov, said last year. "He even chose the color himself."

Paul Sonne ❀



◀ VTD NEWSLETTERS ▶

grab a copy of the latest edition

Check out the latest industry news and VTD initiative updates by grabbing a copy of the Drive Time and Taxi Bulletin newsletters.

Read about the new driver accreditation conditions and the driver health and wellbeing initiative.

Get a copy from your depot, the VTD Customer Service Centre or the Taxi Inspection Centre. Alternatively, you can download a copy from the VTD website (www.taxi.vic.gov.au) or request a copy by calling the VTD on 1800 638 802 (toll-free). ❀



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To build a safe, prosperous taxi service



VTD GM - Marnie Williams

Like all taxi industry stakeholders, the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) eagerly awaits the draft recommendations of the Taxi Industry Inquiry (Inquiry).

The release of the draft recommendations, which will be public by the time this edition of *Taxi Talk* is published, provides an opportunity for the industry to have a say on the direction of reform.

Right now, I don't know what the Inquiry's draft recommendations will be. But I am proud of the real improvements the VTD has made since the Inquiry was announced last year, including:

- Ongoing criminal data checking of past and present taxi drivers
- New guidelines for registered training organisations, which set out for the first time what the VTD expects of the organisations responsible for training and assessing the state's taxi drivers

- A new quality assurance regime to hold training providers to account and ensure all new drivers have the knowledge and skills they need to service the public, and
- The roll-out of next-generation safety cameras, which will be mandatory in areas serviced by 10 or more taxis across the state from 1 July.

But the big changes are still to come.

I know this is an anxious time for many in the industry and for the regulator as we too will be making some significant changes on transition to the Taxi Services Commission. But from uncertainty comes opportunity.

Whatever the recommendations are, I look forward to working with the industry to embrace the changes and build safe, prosperous and customer-focused taxi services for all Victorians. ❀



Have your say on the Taxi Industry Inquiry draft recommendations

◀ SAFETY INCREASE ▶

Melbourne entertainment precincts get CCTV cameras



The Victorian Government is providing \$330,000 to install CCTV cameras in the Chapel Street entertainment precinct, and \$245,000 for the Glenferrie Road (Hawthorn) entertainment precinct.

Crime Prevention Minister Andrew McIntosh said the Chapel Street precinct bars, restaurants, nightclubs and boutiques can attract as many as 10,000 people at once in peak times.

With the influx though, comes the threat of street violence – a threat which has all too frequently become a reality.

“This money will pay for the installation of 10 CCTV cameras in Chapel Street’s worst hot spots for crime and anti-social behaviour. Prahran police will monitor and store the footage, which will assist in investigation and prosecution and help deter crime,” Mr McIntosh said.

In Glenferrie Road, 8 CCTV cameras are being installed. Footage from the cameras will be monitored and stored at Boroondara police station. ❀



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◀ ENFORCEMENT UPDATE ▶

from the Victorian Taxi Directorate

New and amended driving conditions

All accredited drivers should have received a letter notifying them of new and amended driving conditions.

These conditions, along with the updated brochure, are available online at www.taxi.vic.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can obtain a brochure by calling the VTD on 1800 638 802 (toll-free). ❀

Visiting the VTD

Please have your driver licence or other photo identification and any relevant paperwork ready when you approach the counter.

This will allow the VTD staff to better and more efficiently serve your queries. ❀



Queen's Birthday public holiday

Please note that the VTD will be closed on Monday 11 June 2012 due to the Queen's Birthday public holiday. ❀

Industry accreditation

The Taxi Industry Accreditation scheme is five years old which means the accreditation of most operators, Network Service Providers and licence holders will come up for renewal in the next 6-18 months.

As a result, it's important industry participants check when their accreditation is due to expire and begin preparing all the material they will need to apply for renewal.

The VTD will send you an invitation to renew your accreditation approximately 3 months before your accreditation is due to expire. To be prepared ensure that all your records are up to date and once you receive your renewal invitation ensure you submit it as early as possible.



Accredited industry participants must notify the VTD if their circumstances change within 7 days of becoming aware of the change.

Information is available at www.taxi.vic.gov.au or by calling the VTD on 1800 638 802 (toll-free). ❀



New annual licensing fee payment options

The VTD has made it easier for licence owners to pay their annual licensing fees.

Rather than having to pay in person at the VTD or your local VicRoads office, licensing fees can now be paid online, by mail, over the phone or in person at any post office. This includes second year instalments for wheelchair accessible taxi licences released through the Greater Melbourne Taxi Licence Release.

Details of the new payment options will be on the tax invoice you receive shortly.

As a result of the changes, licensing payments will no longer be accepted at the VTD or VicRoads offices. All other fees currently paid at the VTD and VicRoads customer service centres will still be accepted. ❀

To The Arctic 3D

IMAX Melbourne, Melbourne Museum, Calrton Gardens

Of all the truly wild places left on earth, none are as majestic as The Arctic. Today this unforgiving landscape has grown nearly impossible to inhabit, but for the families that live there... it's home.

Come with us and follow one extraordinary polar bear mother on the ultimate journey of love and survival. In To The Arctic 3D captivating footage brings moviegoers up close and personal with this family's struggle to survive in a frigid environment of melting ice, immense glaciers, spectacular waterfalls, and majestic snow-bound peaks. Join this spectacular adventure and discover that nothing is stronger than the power of hope. ❁



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◀ INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL ▶

Hoyts Melbourne Central and Chadstone



The 2012 Indian Film Festival of Melbourne will showcase the Indian film industry this month.

The festival program is packed with more than 40 films and activities, and it is a great opportunity for Victorians to enjoy a unique film experience.

Films from nine languages across India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will be featured.

There will also be more than 20 Australian premieres, one world premiere and an amazing lineup of guests, including some of India's biggest film stars who will be in Melbourne to open the festival.

Leading actors including former Miss World Priyanka Chopra, Shahid Kapoor and Tamil superstar Vijay will be in Melbourne for the festival which kicks off on June 11 with the opening night film Kahaani.

Festival Director Mitu Bhowmick Lange said the Festival encompassed the true spirit of the Indian film industry – right from mainstream Bollywood blockbusters through to more edgy new wave Hindi films, to regional gems in Tamil, Bengali, Malayam and other languages.

The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne will take place from June 11 to 22 at Hoyts Melbourne Central and Hoyts Chadstone, with free screenings at Federation Square. ❀

The Hammy



The Hammy was launched on Friday 11 May with a fabulous musical performance by Josh Moriarty and a great crowd.

An initiative of the Salvation Army, they are excited to welcome Cabbies working on a Friday night.

The same team who run the coffee van at the Queen Street Mega Rank, they already know many drivers and are keen for you to know that the space they are creating is inviting, alcohol free, and friendly.

Every Friday night from 10pm, anyone can drop in for a bite to eat, a catch up with friends or to use their facilities!

Opening every Friday night
10.00pm - 2.00am - Free entry.

Westwood Place, off Bourke
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◀ QUEENS ST MEGA RANK ▶

City of Melbourne providing a safer city

The City of Melbourne has unveiled plans in its draft 2012-13 budget to better connect the city's people and places.

Central to the plan is a \$5.6 million project to create an integrated, safe and accessible bike network, extending the city's bicycle lanes and paths by 15 kilometres over the next year. New bike lanes will be created on some of Melbourne's arterial roads including La Trobe Street, Exhibition Street, Elizabeth Street and Princes Bridge.

In addition to the bike plan, more than \$500,000 will be spent making Melbourne more inclusive for homeless people and \$630,000 on improving safety in the city, including the permanent installation of a mega taxi rank in Queen Street.

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said

the draft budget was about ensuring the city was well connected.

"A city needs to be connected in many ways in order to function well. It's about helping people get where they need to go easily and safely and making sure they feel part of the city when they get there," the Lord Mayor said.

"In this draft budget we have looked closely at the needs of a wide range of city users to provide access to services, places and people whether it be through improved transport options or community services."

Councillor Jennifer Kanis, who covers the People and Creative City portfolio, said the city would also become safer for people out in the city at night and those who were experiencing homelessness.

"We know that Queen Street is one of the city's biggest nightclub precincts and we want to ensure it's safe for revellers. The Queen Street Mega Taxi Rank was a hugely successful pilot so we are now committing \$350,000 towards making it permanent," Councillor Kanis said.

"This is in addition to the CCTV cameras, traffic marshals and security officers used on Queen Street to keep the area safe."

The draft budget was open for public consultation from Friday 11 May until 5pm Friday 8 June 2012. A final version will be considered by Council on Tuesday 28 June 2012. ❖





Google™ anonymous car gets its licence to drive in Nevada





NEVADA, USA. You can talk on your mobile cell phone, even text, check your email, eat your lunch, tune-in your radio, change a CD.... You can even take in all of the distractions along the Strip in Las Vegas... if you hop in a cab.

Or, if you are in Nevada, USA, you can take the Google autonomous car, currently a Toyota Prius, without a driver.

The modified Toyota Prius was issued a license bearing an infinity sign next to the left of number "001" after demonstrating its auto-pilot capabilities on highways, neighborhood streets and even the hectic "strip" in Las Vegas.

Likely to put cab drivers out of business after its testing period in Nevada is finished, the Google autonomous car has a host of benefits.

First, it will never get into an accident on a city street or highway, as its LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) system that sits atop the car processes all surrounding information at once, much faster than a human. The Google car drives safely, never swerving in and out of traffic. It never speeds (sorry about that) and it never tailgates or harasses other drivers!

Aside from the safety elements of the Google autonomous car, no longer in the future, there is the convenience of such a means of transport in this multi-tasking, communication-juggling age, when driving safely now means professional and social 'downtime.'

The autonomous car can provide freedom to the millions of disabled and elderly persons who are not able to drive themselves and now have to depend on others to drive them.

The driver-less car could substitute for busy parents when their kids need rides to and from school. And the Google car could become a 'soccer mum' for the neighborhood kids to transport them to after-school and weekend games and other recreation.

And then, of course, there's nothing like an autonomous chauffeur to escort the pet to the vet or the groomer.

This Google car has the potential to change all our lives and our relationships, and just wait until it learns to talk. Our kids will have closer bonds with their autonomous cars than their parents, and our dogs will wag their tails when their car comes home.

The state of Nevada has issued a license plate giving Google's self-driving car the green light to travel along public roads.

The car was given a unique red license plate to make it recognizable by police and the public as a self-driving test vehicle.

"I felt using the infinity symbol was the best way to represent the car of the future," motor vehicle department director Bruce Breslow said in a statement posted at the state agency's website.

"When there comes a time that vehicle manufactures market autonomous vehicles to the public, that infinity symbol will appear on a green license plate," Breslow said.

Nevada hopes the creation of the test plates will drive companies to develop, test and build autonomous vehicles in the state. ❀



◀ SHED LIGHT ON LIGHT ▶

at Scienceworks, Booker Street, Spotswood

Visitors to Scienceworks are invited to see the world in a whole new light as they dodge through security lasers, paint in infrared and manipulate the colour of their shadows in the new exhibition Playing With Light.

Experience illuminating light, lasers and lenses in this exhibition for the whole family to enjoy.

Through 22 exhibits, Playing with Light gives you the chance to explore and learn about the fundamental ways that light helps us in our everyday lives.

Using innovative and interactive exhibitions to encourage free play, Playing With Light explores the physics and applications of light in everyday life.



“Most of us would rarely stop to think about light, yet it is integral to the world we live in – but what is it exactly?” asks Genevieve Fahey, Manager of Scienceworks.

“This exhibition will give people the chance to understand the properties of light which are behind the things we often take for granted; vision, the beauty of rainbows or paintings, even the high tech world of fibre optic communication and laser surgery.

“Playing With Light provides a visual feast from start to finish, with a highlight of the exhibition being the welcome entrance – an interactive tunnel containing more than 20,000 motion sensitive LEDs.”

Visitors to Scienceworks will also be able to test their espionage skills as they duck and weave their way through a room protected by security lasers, as well as have the opportunity to harness their inner artists by painting in infrared light.

Make yourself shorter, taller, thinner or wider with our flexible mirrors, mix together coloured lights, freeze and interact with your shadows, find out how you can ‘shake your own hand’, make light bounce down a stream of water, paint with light using special virtual paint brushes, plus challenge your friends in our maze of lasers!

Experience light like never before in this interactive exhibition perfect for the whole family.

Entry is included with general admission.

Playing With Light developed by SciTech, Perth. ❀



CERATOSAURS FOUND

The first evidence in Australia of ceratosaurs, a major group of meat-eating dinosaurs that lived 125 million years ago, lends weight to the idea that this continent was once a melting-pot of dinosaur diversity.

"Until now, this group of dinosaurs has been strangely absent from Australia, but now at last we know they were here – confirming their global distribution," said Dr Erich Fitzgerald, Museum Victoria palaeontologist and lead author of the scientific paper

announcing the new discovery.

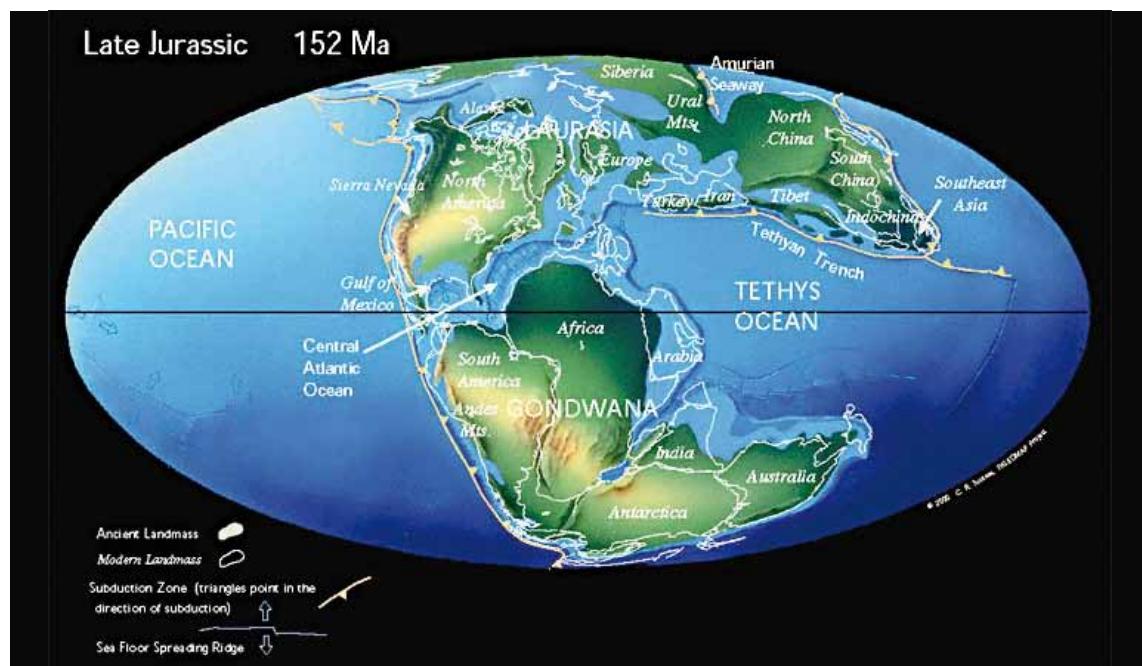
Carnivorous creatures one to two metres in height, ceratosaurs have been found in both the northern and southern hemispheres. "This discovery joins other widespread carnivorous dinosaurs now known to have lived in Australia – tyrannosaurs, spinosaurids and allosaurs," Dr Fitzgerald commented.

Published last month in the prestigious journal, *Naturwissenschaften*, the ceratosaur discovery improves understanding of the distribution and evolution of dinosaurs in eastern Gondwana, the supercontinent of which Australia was once a part.

"It had been thought that isolation played a lead role in the formation of Australia's dinosaur fauna. But the ceratosaur and other new discoveries show that several dinosaur groups were here. These dinosaur lineages date back to the Jurassic, 170 million years ago, when dinosaurs could walk between any two continents," said Dr Fitzgerald.

"Apart from Antarctica, Australia has the world's most poorly known dinosaur record – one of the last frontiers for dinosaur hunters. Although discovery rates are accelerating, we're still in the early days of exploring which dinosaurs actually lived here. Each discovery has the potential to change what we know."

The ceratosaur fossil, an ankle bone (tarsus) only six centimetres wide, was discovered in 2006 near the seaside town of San Remo, 87 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. ❀



Gondwana is the name given to a southern precursor supercontinent. Its final geological suturing occurred between ca. 570 and 510 million years ago (Ma), joining East Gondwana to West Gondwana. It later separated from Laurasia 180-200 million years ago during the breakup of the Pangaea supercontinent that existed about 500 to 200 Ma into two large segments, nearly equal in area. While the corresponding northern-hemisphere continent Laurasia moved further north, Gondwana drifted south. It included most of the landmasses in today's southern hemisphere, including Antarctica, South America, Africa, Madagascar, Australia-New Guinea, and New Zealand, as well as Arabia and the Indian subcontinent, which have now moved entirely into the Northern Hemisphere. ❀

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