

TAXI TALK

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ON THE RANKS SINCE 1966

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ON THE RANKS SINCE 1966

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from **THE** editor's desk

The Victorian government has dealt with Section 159 of the Victorian Transport Act, which, as a result of the recent County Court decision, brought into question the power of the Taxi Services Commission (TSC) to enforce taxi and hire car regulations.

The most serious implication of this potential loophole was that the regulator (in this case the TSC) may not have the power to prevent drivers convicted of serious criminal offences, including sexual offences, from driving a taxi or hire car.

Section 159 has been part of the Transport Act for decades and has existed through Governments of both persuasions and the 2011 Taxi Industry Inquiry. The government has removed it. So, that has plugged up that loophole.

The recent taxi industry fare review undertaken by the Essential Services Commission achieved very little. Not one iota was given to the Victorian taxi drivers and operators - even though the cost of living and CPI had increased in the last 2 years. Apparently because the lpg price has decreased, that is sufficient and the taxi metered fares don't need to keep in line with the rest of the economy.

And so we now come to the bill that Sex Party member, Ms Fiona Patten has put together and was to present to parliament last month. But, just before she did so, the government decided it is time to make a ruling on ride-sharing in Victoria and they are going to work with

Ms Patten to fine-tune the bill. The current proposed bill caters for stringent police checks on ride-sharing drivers, date for oldest age of vehicles together with supply and display of driver's photo and name.

What it doesn't cater for is our wheelchair travelling public and, perhaps, some compensation to our current taxi licence holders.

Minister for Transport Jacinta Allan has said potential compensation for taxi licence owners should be treated on a case-by-case basis, and she wanted a level playing field for all hire cars.

So she is going to review the Sex Party's proposed bill during Victorian Parliament's six week winter break, with a view to presenting an updated, more detailed and all encompassing bill to parliament in August 2016. All being well we should see some action being implemented by Christmas this year.

Cabcharge has sold their three storey Sydney headquarters building in Darlinghurst, to an Asian group for just over \$18 million. They will lease back the building for at least 2 years from the new owners. Some say that they are cashing in on the residential property boom. Others think they have sold it as they are off-loading assets due to the financial pressure they are facing from the likes of Uber. Either way, \$18 million is nothing to be sneezed at.



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In South Australia from July 1, Uber will be allowed to operate. It is expected that a \$1 levy will be imposed by drivers on all metro trips for all passengers of all services, and drivers will have to pay \$50 per week for a maximum of 11 months. This in turn, will go towards some compensation to licence holders affected by legalising Uber. Every South Australian taxi licence holder will also receive compensation to the value of \$30,000.

In NSW last month the Point to Point Transport (Taxi & Hire Vehicle) Bill, 2016 passed the NSW Parliament. Taxi licence plate owners will be compensated from the \$250 million pool that will be created from the \$1 trip levy.

Former Transport Workers Union official Daniel Mookhey, who is now an MP, is proposing that the NSW Industrial Relations Commission is given the power to set the minimum conditions for Uber drivers, such as sick leave, superannuation and annual leave. His proposal includes enforcement of salary arrangements for taxi and ride-share drivers.

So here we are, once again dis-

puting whether taxi drivers (and now ride-share drivers/partners) are employees or contractors, and whether they are entitled to annual and sick leave.

Over in Western Australia it is not much different to the rest of the country. Taxi drivers are complaining their business has fallen dramatically and the value of licence plates has dropped since the arrival of ride-sharing operations in their State.

Mr Edman, a Western Australian Liberal MP, is encouraging the members of the WA taxi industry to stop whinging and get out there and do something.

"The taxi industry has revolutionised the way you can get a cab but the majority of people wouldn't know," he said. "They [the taxi industry] just want to complain, they are upset and they want someone to do something about it - which is fair enough - but why can't they also help themselves?"

"Perhaps they ought to get off their backsides, get out there, grab some of the market back and let people in Western Australia know

these apps are available and are just as good as Uber," Mr Edman continued.

In the north of Australia in sunny Queensland, Uber has been accused of disrespecting the Queensland government and an independent ride-sharing review, by announcing a new service to compete with high occupancy taxis.

They are launching UberXL - a new service providing vehicles that can carry up to six passengers and they claim it will be 30 per cent cheaper than a traditional maxi-taxi.

The Queensland taskforce's chairman, Jim Varghese, has said the ride-sharing review is also looking at linking taxis to public transport networks to help drivers maintain revenue in the face of the increased competition from Uber. The taskforce findings are to be completed and released in July.

What a busy month July is for all within the Australian taxi industries. Let's hope some of the decisions made are the right ones.

Toni Peters
Editor 



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What **about** consumers?

It seems that the interests of consumers get very little real attention when it comes to discussions concerning the Taxi Industry. This could be due to the fact that certain players and decision makers do not understand who the consumer in the taxi industry is, or that self-interest reigns supreme and takes preference over all else.

So, let's have a look at what constitutes a consumer in the taxi industry.

The obvious consumer is naturally the taxi user and he is the most important part of the taxi industry. Nevertheless I will still state the bleeding obvious:

“without the Taxi User there will be no Taxi Industry”.

The other not so obvious consumer is the taxi (driver and car). This is not always as clear as it should be, because the taxi is both the supplier to the taxi user and the consumer with regard to taxi bookings.

The role of the taxi is very often confused by issues of licence values and licence leases, which do not influence the maximum fare structure, and should therefore be irrelevant in the discussion.

There can be no doubt about the fact that neither the Network Service Providers nor the various suppliers of apps, including Uber, are able or even willing to provide the service to the taxi user.

It should be noted that neither the radio networks nor any of the providers of apps own any cars for transporting people or are responsible for any of the costs associated with the running of these vehicles.

Yet all these interest groups are advocating that fares should be deregulated or, what is even more despicable, in Uber's case where they defy the law, charge whatever they like.

What do the radio networks and all the other providers of apps (including Uber) have in common and where do they differ?

All of them use a driver and a car (the transport service provider) to transport people from point A to B for a monetary reward.

So it becomes quite obvious that the term 'Rideshare' is inappropriate and misleading. Now the question is what service do these companies provide and who are their customers?

It is at this point where Uber and some other suppliers of apps diverge from the radio networks.

Uber sends a car and driver to transport people from A to B and charges the passenger an amount of money that is calculated using time and distance.

Furthermore it uses an algorithm to determine a loading based on the availability of car and driver, where and when it feels like it.



We can see that in this case the passenger is clearly a customer of Uber and not a customer of the driver of the car.

Uber collects the money from the customer and then determines how much it gives to the driver of the car. This means that the driver has no control over the amount of money charged or over the amount paid to him by Uber.

This seems to have all the trademarks of an employer/employee relationship and using fanciful words to describe another relationship does not change the facts.

Uber might still be able to overcome the employer hurdle by the sheer weight of money.

They take on the world and are on a path of colonising countries, not by the use of canons and armoury, but by money and deception.

They make their own laws and enslave the workforce like the old colonialists did.

Where is our democracy when the interests and profits of big foreign tech companies are put ahead of the interest of thousands of small

taxi business people in Victoria and Australia?

A few more words have to be said with regard to the Network Service Providers.


They are at the moment providing a service to the taxi industry by bringing the passenger and the taxi together.


The Network Service Providers are paid by the taxi industry and the taxi industry is their only paying customer.

It is also quite clear that the radio networks would like to have greater control over the industry, but this could be a dangerous game to play.


How would they feel if they were classified as employers?

Let us all hope that the Victorian Government does not change, but uphold our laws, rather than giving into an American bully that treats our laws with total disdain.

Hans Altoff
Taxi Owner / Operator 



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Taximeter **world** first

Schmidt Electronic Laboratories has scored two 'world first' technology breakthroughs with its new G5 Taximeter, soon to be released.

The G5 is the first taximeter in the world to be fully self-calibrating, meaning that it continuously checks its accuracy and recalibrates itself whenever required, for example, whenever the tyres are changed or a transmission or differential box is swapped out.

"Our unique self-calibrating technology means that operators will no longer need to get their taximeters recalibrated at workshops. The G5 will calibrate itself fully automatically whenever needed. Manual calibration will be a thing of the past. This feature will save operators both valuable time and money", said Gary Schmidt, CEO and Chief Engineer.

In another world first for Schmidt Taximeters, the G5 will completely eliminate off-meter fares using ultrasonic passenger detection technology.

It's common knowledge that many drivers take off-meter fares which reduce the operator's income. The optional Passenger Detection System starts a fare whenever a passenger occupies a seat in the taxi and the taxi begins to move. While a passenger is in the taxi, fares cannot be stopped until the taxi becomes stationary.

"Many of our taxi operator customers believe that as much as 10% of revenue is lost every year due to off-meter fares", said Mr. Schmidt.

"That could mean lost revenue of about \$15,000 per annum per taxi, or lost operator profit of about \$7000 every year per taxi. Our new G5 Taximeter could pay for itself many times over every year," he added.

The new G5 Taximeter incorporates many other novel features. Operators can control the operation of the G5 via secure log-in to the G5 website and can customise the data which drivers key into the taximeter at the end of shifts. They can customise the data uploaded from the taximeter, control the operation of the Passenger Detection System and even enable or disable the starting of fares. Operators can access comprehensive shift reports online, get details on every fare taken, compare drivers and vehicles and generate customised financial reports.

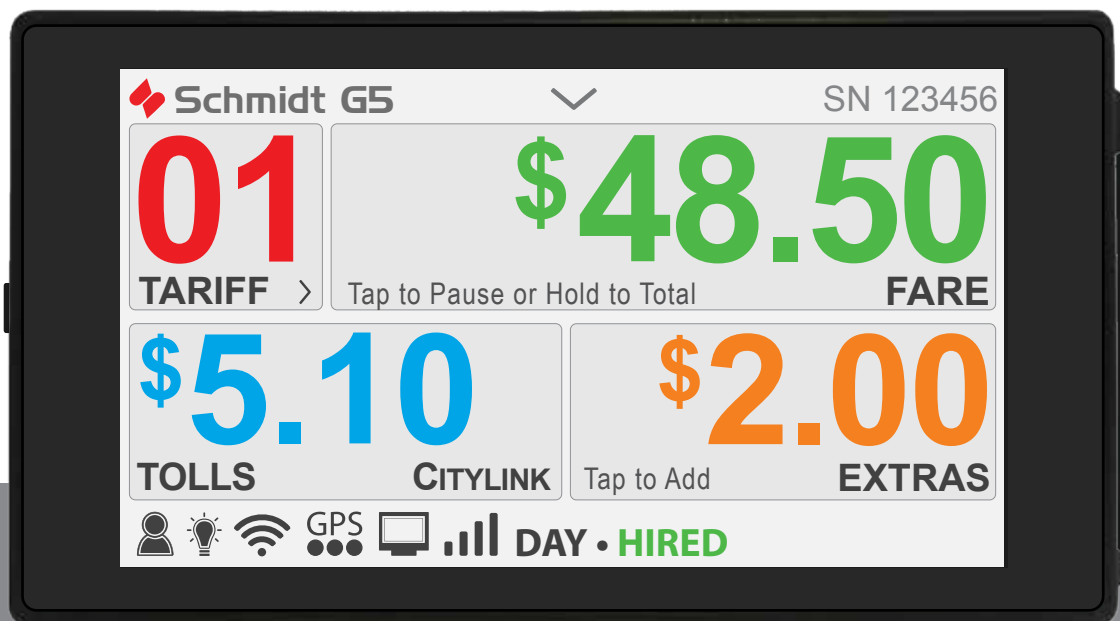
The G5 Taximeter incorporates the largest LCD display in the Australian taximeter industry. Its 159mm x 86mm size means that the display digits are large and bright for easy readability, with separate "day" and "night" views for driver and passenger comfort.

The G5 features automated road tolling and airport fees, secure wireless updates for rate changes and software upgrades, 9 serial ports and an expandable USB port for connectivity and numerous other features.

Schmidt is one of the world's most famous names in taximeters. They are sold all over Australia and to numerous countries overseas.

To download a detailed brochure visit www.schmidt.com.au/g5-taximeter 





Day View

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- **Eliminates off-meter fares and could pay for itself many times over every year**

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- **Prevent other parties from owning your confidential income data and putting your privacy at risk**

- **Control your taximeter via secure website log-in**

ESC fare **review** fair?

The final report from the Essential Services Commission (ESC) has now been published with an outcome that surprised no-one in our industry.

While the Essential Services Commission (ESC) maintains it is independent, and presumably objective in its assessments, some of the terminology it has used, as in its previous review, such as the need to achieve “outcome based” results appears to conflict with its objectivity.

The explanations provided in *Appendix D of Draft Report Volume 2* are at odds with the experience of most operators: being neither economists nor academics, operators rely on an overview of their costs / income as it is incurred on a daily basis and reflected in their bank accounts and financial statements, as most who operate in the real world do.

The ESC, however, has a different perspective. Preferring to treat driver costs as an opportunity cost instead of a direct, indeed significant, labour cost although its attendant Workcover component is included.

Of course to have done so would have meant recognising the impact of the implementation of the Taxi Industry Inquiry 55% / 45% amendment to driver agreements and the consequent 10% increase in driver costs to operators.

The inclusion of this ‘opportunity cost’ in Tables D2 and D3 would have put a different complexion on the results shown and their impact on operations.

Similarly the treatment of network fees is questionable.

Why has this cost been divided into equipment and labour components?

At the end of the day operators only look at what they are paying and that cost is now higher than it was two years ago despite the fact that taxi numbers increased by just over 10% and taxi trips declined by 9%, presumably with networks distributing fewer jobs to larger fleets.

Surely that is a cost increase instead of the decrease asserted by the ESC?

The impact of earlier decisions has not been considered fully, given the detrimental effect these changes have had on the industry in terms of driver availability and in some operations, a poor outcome in terms of consumer benefits.

This is certainly the case in the WAT / Maxi area.

The removal of the higher tariff and introduction of a \$14 fee, resulted in many drivers leaving this sector of the industry and drivers reassessing the value of maxi work.



For example, where's the value in driving 5kms, 10kms to do a maxi job for \$7.70 (\$14 @ 55%), leaving consumers to engage two or three sedans? Where's the consumer benefit?


The thinking behind this was based on the perceived incidence of tariff fraud and so all drivers in this area were penalised because of the actions of some.

If this incidence of fraud was as prevalent as indicated why did the VTD / TSC not take appropriate action against the perpetrators?

Such a resolution to a problem would be unacceptable in most commercial operations and just imagine the outcry if this had happened in a unionised environment.

Both this, the 2014 review and the Taxi Industry Inquiry are disappointing to most in the industry.

Far from providing worthwhile reforms they seem intent on destroying the industry and bankrupting those who have put so much into it.

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Oh what a feeling!

Uber impasse **solution**

The Government's attempts to solve the emergence of ride share services via prosecution in the Courts, were doomed to fail from the outset.

Uber is a multi-national goliath that is capable of exhausting the State Government through the Courts. This was again in stark relief with last month's outcome in the County Court.

Alan Fels' reforms of the Taxi and Hire Car Industry, which were adopted wholeheartedly by the previous Liberal Government, were out of date even before they began as Uber began operating in Australia at the end of 2012. Two years on, the Laws are a joke.

Taxi and Hire Car Operators are struggling to stay afloat under an insurmountable cost burden imposed upon them by Government.

Meanwhile, the life savings of thousands, invested in good faith in Government issued licences, have been trashed!

The State Government's little cash cow – selling Taxi and Hire car licences – has been exposed for what it was. And the Government no longer has any idea of who operates a commercial passenger vehicle in Victoria as thousands are operating off the Uber platform.

The Government has lost the plot.

Alan Fels himself has jumped ship – he has abandoned his own rules and now bats for Uber as he is employed on their International advisory body.

Whilst everyone is battling to protect their little fiefdom, it's the Victorian travelling Public who is being served a compromised and contorted service offering.

Should I do the right thing and get a legal service and pay the small premium, or run the gauntlet and go for the cheaper, 'illegal' (and uninsured?) option.

The travelling Public has tired of the Government's bungling and has naturally, swarmed to the cheaper offerings, including Uber.

The only hope for a viable long term solution is via legislation not prosecution.

As the emergence of technology has fused the function of Taxis and pre-booked cars - Hire Cars, Uber, In-gogo, Mum's Taxi Service (and many more to come) - it is in the Interests of all Victorians that a long term legislative framework is put in place that:

- provides consumers a broad choice of offerings
- ensures the travelling public's safety - by mandating Police checks, Health checks, RWC and Commercial Passenger Vehicle insurance
- ensures everyone operating for commercial advantage pays their fair share of Tax and
- acknowledges the investment made in Government licences by existing operators.

This can all be achieved, cheaply, quickly and in a way that provides Government with an growing annuity into the future.

A Government buy out of all existing Hire Car licences in the State of Victoria would cost \$45 million. The Government should then lease licences to all (non-taxi) operators at \$100 per month. This would raise \$11 million annually – and would grow over time. The Government would easily recoup its investment over the first 4 years.

That's called good business and a great investment for Victorian taxpayers!

At this price point, licences are cheap and accessible to all.

A \$1 levy should then be introduced on every fare for four years –

taxis, Hire Cars, Uber, Ingogo – the lot. This would raise \$40-50 million annually.

The Government should match this dollar for dollar and set up a Fund that over four years is worth \$350-400 million with which it could offer a genuine compensation scheme to Taxi Licence holders – approximately \$100,000 each as opposed the insult of \$20,000 offered by the NSW Government.

Taxis would retain the right of the rank and hail privileges and should have other costs such as \$2,800 registration fees reduced.

These reforms would establish a level playing field for all operators.

Then the industry should be left alone to focus on providing Victorians with great customer service in

order to win their custom – just like every other Industry.

Daniel Andrews and Mathew Guy are responsible.

I have put this proposal repeatedly to both the office the Transport Minister and the Opposition Leader. Both have recognised the merits of such a proposal. But both continue to use this as a political football and blame the other side.

The Industry deserves better. The travelling public deserves better.

It's time for the Premier and the Opposition Leader to genuinely address the issue and stop abdicating their responsibility to Victorians.

George Kapnias
Managing Director

Southern Cross HQLC Pty Ltd **TT**

To regulate or not...

Last month, MPs Fiona Patten and Jacinta Allan, agreed to work together to develop a regulatory framework for ride-share services for Victoria.

Providing for ride-share services raises a number of complex and inter-related issues regarding passenger safety, equity for the existing industry and access for people with a disability, among others.

Transport Minister Jacinta Allan believes that Fiona Patten's Bill provides a way-forward on a number of these issues, but there is more to be done to develop a safe, fair, workable framework and provide certainty to the industry.

"I acknowledge her hard work on this issue and share her desire to see this growing industry regulated – I look forward to continuing discussions with Ms Patten to develop a solution that works for passengers and the industry," said Ms Allan.

"That may mean deregulating the taxi industry to a certain extent, because they've been regulated because they've had a monopoly up until now."

"This is clearly an industry that is going through change, in part brought about by technology," she said.

"There are many different areas the framework needs to contemplate," she said. "I understand there has been a desire for action. But it is complex," said the Minister.

"There is a lot to consider and it's not with a stroke of the pen that you can change the taxi industry overnight. We want to take the time to get this right," she continued.

Sex Party MP Fiona Patten said

"The Government has been working on this for 15 months, I think six more weeks should be plenty of time. We have established the foundation for this in our bill ... now it's about migrating the regulations that will keep control in this industry and allow it to operate safely."


"I would certainly like to see something substantial in early August and I would hope to see it operating before Christmas," she continued.

Premier Daniel Andrews said "The government will regulate ride-sharing, but we're going to do it properly".

He said other states had acted quickly on ride-sharing, but did not get it right.

"I think getting this right is the most important thing. We are a step closer to being able to regulate this industry," said Premier Andrews.

Opposition Transport spokesman David Hodgett said, "Once again, Daniel Andrews has chosen to defer making a decision on ride-sharing, showing he'll continue to sit on his hands while consumers, drivers and the taxi industry are kept in limbo about their future."

"If there is no agreement by the resumption of Parliament in August, the Liberal Nationals will introduce our own bill to legalise Uber." 

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Taxi Lineup **expands**

Uber disruption can work the other way with Taxi Lineup, allowing taxi drivers to deliver parcels 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Taxi Lineup was developed by Australian business owner Anthony Lechner after he searched unsuccessfully for a cost effective platform to get urgent deliveries across town at any time or day of the week.

The premise is simple. Taxis provide a large network of registered drivers who can be tracked across the city and suburbs, and are on the road 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Existing local courier services are mostly restricted to business hours delivery and a limited fleet of vehicles.

Since inception at the end of March 2016, the young startup has seen a steady growth. With a network of more than 300 registered taxi drivers operating in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra and Newcastle, Taxi Lineup already services daily bookings (with a weekly growth rate of around 40%) for individuals and businesses across these cities.

The Taxi Lineup Application develop-

ment team has been simplifying and improving its booking process to allow customers to book instantly, with no account requirements. Users are able to track bookings from pickup to delivery. Taxi Lineup offers three delivery services, 1hour, 3hour and same day (6hour).

Their driver network is increasing 30% per week, and taxi drivers are seeing the service as a new important source of income. Some drivers already earned more some days with parcel deliveries than with passenger rides.

The team is looking to expand to all the capital cities in Australia as well as important regional cities in the near future. **TT**



statistics

MAY 2016



Taxi zone	Licence type	# of licences 30/6/14	# of licences 30/6/15	# of licences 31/5/16	Changes since 30/6/14	Changes since 30/6/15
Metro	Conventional	3,826	4,399	4,226	400	-173
	WAT	504	492	448	-56	-42
	Total	4,330	4,891	4,674	344	-215
Urban	Conventional	357	400	417	60	17
	WAT	75	79	81	6	2
	Total	432	479	498	66	19
Regional	Conventional	253	261	264	11	3
	WAT	75	77	73	-2	-4
	Total	328	338	337	9	-1
Country	Conventional	126	126	128	2	2
	WAT	36	34	35	-1	1
	Total	162	160	163	1	3
Totals	Conventional	4,562	5,186	5,035	473	-151
	WAT	690	682	637	-53	-45
	Total	5,252	5,868	5,672	420	-196

The above figures are updated and published on the Taxi Services Commission website each week. Figures shown consist of both active licences and those that have been approved but have not yet been operationalised at the time of reporting.

Number of drivers

Active drivers14,839
Accredited drivers (taxi, hire car & bus)46,280

Compliance outcomes

Vehicle Inspections 1,470
Rectification Notices 129
Infringement Notices 83
Official written warning notices 3

HIRE CAR LICENCES **\$35,414**

Number of Victorian Hire Vehicle Licences

Metropolitan Hire Cars1,134
Country Hire Cars63
Special Purpose Vehicles961
Restricted Hire Cars606
TOTAL 2,764

The **metro taxi licence average price** of \$143,720 is based on the **10 genuine market based transactions** that occurred in the metropolitan zone during **May 2016**.

The Taxi Services Commission's standard practice is to only count those licence transfers where a genuine market based transaction has occurred. They do this by applying a number of standard business rules. The aim of these business rules is to identify genuine market based transfers of taxi licences and to base average price calculations on these transactions only. Therefore, where it appears a non-market based licence transfer has occurred, these transactions are excluded in the calculation of licence values. An example is where a licence holder transfers the licence to a new business name but still retains ownership of the licence. **TT**

50
YEARS

Where it all began...

VTHF committee and members would like to thank the team at *Taxi Talk* magazine, the Victorian taxi and hire car magazine, for the opportunity to provide a monthly column updating all in the industry.

It's important to note where this all began.

Once the Fels reforms were passed through Parliament, a group of women sat around a kitchen table, disturbed at the impact these reforms were having on our families...VTF (Victorian Taxi Families) was born, 4 years ago.

Within weeks we held our first rally on the steps of Parliament, with a gathering of a couple of hundred.

We quickly formed a committee, created distribution lists with all facets of the industry - owners, operators and drivers.

It was to be another 12 months before we formally registered as an association, and an old stalwart in the industry, Leo Mauro, has been front and centre every step of the way.

All sides of politics were heavily lobbied, and we spent a great deal of time gathering evidence and presenting it to politicians, but we continued our rallies.

We even stormed the Taxi Services Commission (TSC) building in Exhibition Street, demanding a meeting, which we achieved, but not the desired outcome by Mulder and Napthine.

We held hunger strikes on the steps of Parliament, and who can forget the Geoff Shaw scuffle, who must have felt very intimidated by a woman and 2 elderly gentlemen.

We blockaded the CBD numerous times, but always carefully ensured only 10% of taxis were taken off the road, thus never inconveniencing the public.

Whilst we were NOT inconveniencing the public, we had Fels in media calling us "greedy investors" and others commenting like Graeme Samuels, that "ants can be crushed by an elephant". Hence we were ants and greedy, but nowhere was it mentioned how hard people in this industry worked, as we paid loans and worked long hours behind the wheel ferrying the public.

We lobbied hard in marginal seats across the entire state of Victoria, to ensure the Liberals would not win another term in government and we WON.

Or so we thought!

We then morphed in VTHF (Victorian Taxi and Hire Car Families), as the hire cars began to see how their destruction was also imminent.

We now come to present day, and have 17 people from different walks of life on our committee, inclusive of drivers, owners and operators of both taxis and hire cars.

We truly are a multicultural association and industry, and have recently begun to also lease licenses, trying to provide some stability and sustainability to the industry. Our membership and following has grown considerably and we are proud of who we are and what we represent.

We sit on the Ministerial Forum, liaise with the TSC and Ministers, and work with the ESC, so provide an industry perspective. We have quickly become a voice for us, the little people in the industry.

We continue to lobby Ministers, and our Facebook page (for those that use social media) is watched by 23 countries, and we have affiliates in every state of this great country, that we liaise with on a national level, with strategies and share ideas.

To date we have kept Uber illegal. Regardless of what is sprouted, **THEY ARE ILLEGAL!**

Our current government has taken almost 2 years, however we want the legislation to be air-tight to ensure our industry is not disadvantaged as



has been witnessed in other states like NSW, and therefore are waiting with baited breath for the draft to be presented.

We have had some great support from Federal Members like Anthony Byrne, the member for Holt.

As we move forward, we are launching legal action at Federal level, NOT STATE, and are putting our politicians on notice...

We have rights as citizens of this country and we won't go away with fighting.

We will be holding a stakeholder meeting July 10 with our legal representatives, to explain what we are doing NATIONALLY, and whomever wishes to join the class action will need to place their names on a register and assist in paying fees. Only people registered will benefit from this action.

Until next month,

VTHF Committee 

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Letter to Victorian parliament

We understand that a decision regarding rideshare operations is imminent and are keen to ensure that any outcomes are fair to the current hardworking industry participants, who have always complied with requirements as set out by our legislation.

The situation is dire for the many families who rely on this industry for their livelihood. Their market share is aggressively being robbed from them by a multinational player that is shamelessly exploiting an unfair competitive advantage, while flagrantly asking/implying that their partner drivers should disregard regulation. This situation has been made worse by the recent ruling of the County Court.

As you consider the options to remedy the current situation, we remain hopeful that there is an understanding of how desperate the situation really is becoming for the extensive number of families who are reliant on this industry and affected in an enormous capacity.

When making your decision, please consider:

- Taxis and hire cars contribute over \$2 billion annually in taxes, whilst Uber's contribution has been around \$400,000 in 3 years.
- Taxis and hire cars represent 250,000 full time jobs nationally excluding feed in industries and admin staff; Uber promotes part time, transient workers, that with the demise of the taxi/hire-car industry will force drivers to shift across but they will have to work for much lower income.
- Taxis and hire cars provide a visible service that is easily policed, whilst Uber X cars are hard to distinguish from other private cars, impacting on traceability and consumer safety.
- Taxis provide regulated metered fares and Hire cars negotiated sustainable fares, whilst Uber allows extreme surge pricing taking advantage of consumers.
- Taxis and hire cars provide all forms of payments for consumers to choose from, Uber is limited to only in-app electronic payment.
- Taxis and hire cars provide commercial insurance security, while rideshare drivers who subscribe to Uber X are not obligated to buy commercial insurance - private insurance does not cover them adequately.
- Taxis and hire car Drivers are regularly vetted through stringent Government implemented knowledge and background checks, Uber self-regulates through an online signup process that conducts "contractor" intermittent background checks.
- Taxis and hire cars provide services 24/7 year round, rideshare drivers only drive when it suits them, mostly at times of surge pricing.
- Taxis provide service to disabled, elderly and children, with appropriate facilities/checks to service the special needs of our most vulnerable, rideshare are not equipped to cope with these needs.
- Uber only provide services to people who have smart phones with the app.
- Taxis and hire cars provide a formal complaint handling service, with real people that can be contacted, Uber only respond via electronic means, (email).
- Taxis and hire cars adhere to all obligations and regulations requirements and are held to account, Uber have flagrantly disregarded regulation, and invested substantial time and money in trying to influence/force law makers worldwide to produce outcomes to suit their company objectives.
- Taxis and hire cars support the local and national economy, Uber sends profits offshore to tax havens.

- Taxis and hire cars are the livelihood for over 2 million families nationally, Uber is a supplementary income for a transient workforce.
- ACCC banned the use of an APP for taxis for anti-competitive reasons.
- Taxi and hire car industry welcomes choice so as to provide quality and efficiency to customers via a platform that is fair to all stakeholders.
- UBER has been BANNED in many countries and jurisdictions around the world:

We respect that time needs to be taken and appreciate evermore so, that this matter must be handled with absolute care. We also reiterate that time is running out for the many people who have always abided by the law and the longer it takes to reach a resolution, the more is lost by so many who have suffered under the ill-conceived reforms of 2013.

Do not be bullied by a multinational company that muscled its way into our economy by illegal means and then says "I'm here now, so legislate under my terms." This Government must be firm and set the example to other governments, multinational companies and industries vulnerable to this unconscionable activity. Decisions should not be about giving consumers what they think they want, but rather ensuring they get what they need.

This is the Government's opportunity to right the wrongs of the past government and to help our families for a fair, safe and sustainable industry into the future.

signed, The Victorian Taxi & Hire-car Families (VTHF) **TT**



Become members of our united, credible and honest association

**Drivers, Operators, Licence
Holders and Networks of
Victorian Taxi or Hire Cars**

**REGISTER WITH US
AND BE PART OF
A UNITED VOICE**

What do we do?

We keep members up-to-date with the latest news and information affecting the taxi and hire-car industry by member bulletins, region meetings, industry events, social media and articles within *Taxi Talk* magazine.

The VTHF provides proactive leadership on important issues, focussing on industry fairness, equity, security and sustainability, whilst striving to build a positive community profile for the Victorian taxi industry.

The Victorian Taxi & Hire Car Families

For more information call in and see us at:
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105 Normanby Road, North Caulfield

Ring Leo any time on
0409 562 531



**Unity will
achieve our
goal**



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Robot Taxi provides on-board entertainment whilst ensuring that you travel the best driving route.

It can help transport patients to and from hospitals and nursing care facilities. It will free up staff so they can spend more of their valuable time providing care to patients.

Robot Taxi will also service the areas where local buses, railways, and taxi services are no longer available due to driver shortages or budget limits.

Providing a transportation option in tourists' native languages, while also giving them an enjoyable experience thanks to cutting edge vehicle technology, Robot Taxi can promote a new IT-enhanced craftsmanship that will benefit Japan's image in the global marketplace.

The major goal is to get Robot Taxis on the road for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. **ti**

Dubai

The Dubai Taxi Corporation (DTC) recently implemented a **Happiness Indicator** to measure the happiness level of employees and taxi drivers with the services provided to them.

Dr Yousuf Al Ali, CEO of DTC, said: "The launch of the **Happiness Indicator** within the DTC conforms to the Dubai Government's drive to measure the happiness level of community members in a bid to maximise it and ensure the development drive is human-focused. The **Happiness Indicator** is a kind of a questionnaire where the employee and the driver can report in a transparent manner his or her impressions about the level of happiness — happy, neutral, unhappy — with the job he or she is doing.

Weekly reports capturing the results will then be compiled and analysed, and accordingly initiatives and projects addressing such needs will then be developed."

He added: "The DTC is keen on offering multiple initiatives and initiatives targeting 427 employees and more than 11,000 drivers in a bid to raise their satisfaction, considering them ambassadors and a true mirror reflecting the policy and strategy of the DTC in the Emirate.

The introduction of the **Happiness Indicator** stems from the deep conviction of the DTC that the happiness of employees and drivers reflects positively on the overall job performance and operational efficiency. " **ti**

United Kingdom

Six weeks after its launch in London, Karhoo (a taxi comparison app) is taking on the rest of the UK.

The ride-hailing app, which lets you compare different taxi companies simultaneously, is yet another alternative to Uber, Hailo and Kabbee.

The difference is that Karhoo wants to be an open platform, presenting a range of prices, vehicles and estimated arrival times so that you can make an informed decision.

Any company, aside from Uber, can theoretically sign up and have its fleet listed inside Karhoo's iOS and Android apps. That includes black cab, minicab and executive car hire providers.

Karhoo is slowly rolling out in the following cities: Nottingham, Derby, Leeds, Bristol, Bradford, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Brighton, Stoke on Trent, Belfast, Manchester, Glasgow, Leicester and Birmingham. It'll go international with New York and Singapore in a couple of months.

Today's expansion gives Karhoo considerable reach in the UK, which is important if it's to gain traction as a viable Uber alternative.

The company does have a few advantages over its ferocious and well-funded rival -- you can pre-book a ride through the app, for instance, and there's no surge pricing to worry about it.

Karhoo's battle is still a tricky one, however. It needs to get the word out, which is easier said than done, while undercutting its rivals and keeping the traditional taxi industry on side.

Nick Sommers 

Europe

Volkswagen Group made it rain on Gett with a \$300 million investment, as part of a "strategic partnership" that aims to fuel Gett's growth.

"Alongside our pioneering role in the automotive business, we aim to become a world leading mobility provider by 2025," said Volkswagen CEO Matthias Müller.

The on-demand ride-hailing company has raised at least \$520 million to date and operates in more than 60 cities worldwide.

"With VW's investment, Gett will now accelerate its expansion to the rest of Europe, and strengthen its position in NYC, where we already operate," said Gett's founder and CEO Shahar Waiser.

Sindy Nanclares 


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Is mateship a myth?

Is the great Aussie male bond of mateship all it's cracked up to be?

Making the effort to catch up regularly with friends is one of the best defences against depression, anxiety and suicide.



Anybody not coping day-to-day, feeling lonely or isolated and needing to talk about it, can join the beyondblue online forums at www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums.

They can also contact the beyondblue Support Service 24/7 on 1300 22 4636, or via the online chat service daily from 3pm to midnight (AEST) at www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support.



Nearly eight Australians die by suicide every day and of those six are men, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

One of the groups most at risk of suicide is men aged in their 30s and 40s, but research shows they are also most likely to let friendships slide as their lives change and they focus on work and family.

Research has revealed that:

- 25 per cent of middle-aged Australian men have nobody outside their immediate family to rely on;
- 45 per cent say they were not satisfied with the number of friends and acquaintances they have;
- 60 per cent don't feel they are part of a community.


"Just because you go to the footy with someone or call your work colleagues 'mate', doesn't mean you have the kind of friendship that allows you to talk about mental health issues," said beyondblue Chairman Jeff Kennett.

"True mateship has real depth to it. Real mates are there for one another no matter what, so don't be afraid to talk about feeling down or not coping. A real mate will listen and back you up while you get the help you need."

Anybody concerned about themselves or a friend's mental health, but worried about saying the wrong thing, can learn how to start a conversation at www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/have-the-conversation.

Then take action: Pick up the phone, make a time to catch up, knock on your friend's door, ask how he's really feeling, or check out the beyondblue website.

Dr Stephen Carbone, Policy, Research and Evaluation Leader at beyondblue said: "While women tend to make new friends when their circumstances change, it appears that men don't.

"Men don't rate social support as a big issue, but as they age they should put some effort into maintaining meaningful friendships and family connections." 



Send your opinion letter to

email: yoursay@taxitalk.com.au

post: PO Box 2345 Mt Waverley VIC 3149

Please include your name & full contact details for verification.

TSC should uphold the laws

The TSC and Parliament have now got together, after spending thousands of our dollars on losing a court case that it should have done better at.

To be conciliatory we need to impress on the government, as other limousine owners have already stated many times, that all we want is the TSC to uphold the laws themselves.

To be turning a blind eye to so many illegal operations the VTD and TSC have now brought on this situation. By enforcing the regulations and communicating with the industry as a whole and not just small groups, then TSC could show us it is doing something.

Section 159 of the applicable Act has now been amended but it raises

many questions previously raised in part by the VHCA about drivers having to go to VCAT concerning their accreditation and licencing. The most serious implications of the loophole was that the government may never have had the power to prevent drivers convicted of serious criminal offences of driving a commercial passenger vehicle.

And, of course, not only that, drivers were being suspended because they were charged and received no compensation if they were later found not guilty.

This was probably the reason a recently convicted sex offender drove commercial passenger vehicles for years and renewed his drivers certificate approximately 4 times. He did not declare the charges pending. Information given by two licence holders to the VTD and TSC went unrecorded and the same TSC who lost the recent court case allowed this now convicted person to operate.

Getting back to Uber. The International Business Times recently reported abuse by an Uber driver on a lesbian couple. (maybe they were from the TSC!). Whilst this is a sad state of affairs we all need to be mindful of our responsibilities.

A group of upper house Victorian MPs will investigate how to regulate ride-sharing service Uber and report

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back in December, after the government promised an answer last year. Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan says the December deadline is too far away.

"We'd be wanting to make some announcements and responses on the ride-sharing issue much earlier than that," Ms Allan told reporters [last month].

Premier Daniel Andrews said in April 2015 he expected a plan on Uber "quite soon". But the plan fell in a heap when the government's expert panel came back with inconclusive results in August 2015. Now a sub-committee of ministers is looking at how to regulate Uber, which will soon be legal in four states and the ACT.

Uber Melbourne general manager Matt Denman said it was disappointing there had been no action on the ride-sharing service despite the expert panel handing over its advice in 2015.

"We have made repeated requests to meet with the premier and the minister. Those requests have been declined," Mr Denman told AAP.

Mr Denman said a ministerial committee making decisions behind closed doors didn't sound like transparent, evidence-based policy making.

"If this sub-committee isn't talking to us about ride sharing and isn't listening to the thousands of drivers and half a million riders in Melbourne, we are perplexed about who it might be consulting," he said.

The inquiry will look at barriers to entry, consumer protection, customer safety, competition, and how impacts of such regulation on the taxi industry can be minimised, among other topics.

A very concerned limo driver 

Drivers dig deep

Silver Top Taxis' driver, Mr Mohamud Mohmud Muketar, 31, was attacked and killed less than 200 metres from his home in Fitzroy late one Wednesday night in April this year.

Mr Muketar was a well-respected and much loved person in the area. He had finished his shift driving a taxi, which he shared with his father, when he was attacked and left fatally wounded.

I rallied around to get some money together to assist with burial costs of Mohamud. Victorian's taxi and hire-car drivers certainly stepped up, came together and put in for this cause.

Thanks to Michael, Sam (pictured right) and staff at Melrose Cafe, Melbourne Airport Holding Bay, for their wonderful support and assistance in getting the huge money boxes filled with donations. We raised \$3220 from taxi and hire-car drivers. Thanks also to the office staff who counted the money.



We also raised a further \$150 on ranks and at TaxiLink depot. We gave a total of \$3370 to Muktar Hussen, Mohamud Muketar's devastated father, to help pay for his son's funeral.

Kim Dixon, Taxi Driver 

Adelaide 13cabs

Starting 1/07/2016 13Cabs Adelaide are putting vehicles up to 8 years old on the road with 13Cabs logo.

No police check or taxi licence required. Will be able to access account work, set fair work and radio work. Will not be able to pick up from Airport, stands or government subsidy work. Just pay base fees.

The understanding is this has been directed by 13Cabs Melbourne. If it succeeds in South Australia no state will be safe.

K Holden 



Building a world-class taxi service



**AARON
de Rozario**
CEO Taxi Services Commission

The Taxi Services Commission is the regulator of the Victorian taxi and hire car industry



INDUSTRY UPDATE

Credit Card Fraud

Since the introduction of Tap and Go (payWave and PayPass) EFTPOS terminals, complaints to the Taxi Services Commission (TSC) relating to the misuse of passenger credit cards, overcharging and fraudulent transactions have increased.

The TSC is rigorously investigating these complaints and also working with portable EFTPOS terminal suppliers to address these issues.

Credit card fraud and overcharging passengers are serious criminal offences and drivers found to be fraudulently overcharging will be prosecuted and their driver accreditation may be cancelled. **TT**



INDUSTRY UPDATE

Accreditation and Licensing

Payment options

Effective 1 July 2016 the Taxi Services Commission (TSC) Customer Service Centre will no longer accept cash payments for any transactions for TSC or VicRoads services.

Payments can be made by bank cheque, money order or via EFTPOS.

Accreditation renewal

The TSC recommends that drivers submit their application for driver accreditation renewal at least two weeks prior to expiry, to ensure their accreditation is renewed and they receive their new certificate and cards before the expiry date.

Drivers who have a one year accreditation due to a monitored medical condition, are encouraged to submit their renewal as soon as they receive all specialist reports required.

Renewal notices are sent out 16 weeks prior to the driver accreditation expiry date.

Within 3 months of expiry:-

- The driver can still submit their renewal, however they will incur an additional \$45 fee as a police check will be conducted by the TSC.

While many police checks are returned to the TSC the same day, some can take up to 10-15 business days for police agencies to verify.

More than 3 months after expiry:-

- Drivers will need to submit a new application and for Metropolitan Taxi, Urban Taxis and Metropolitan Hire car drivers, they will also need to sit the Knowledge Test.

Invoicing

The TSC is currently reconciling commercial passenger vehicle licence invoicing arrangements, to align all annual licence fees with licence anniversary dates (the date the licence was granted). If you own a licence and your invoice is not aligned with the anniversary date of the licence, you will receive a pro-rata invoice for a part year payment to align your fee to the anniversary date of the licence.

Please note that if you are not the original owner of the licence (ie. you purchased the licence from another person) the date on your licence certificate will be the date the licence commenced in your name - not the date the licence was originally granted by the government.

Forms

Earlier in 2016, the TSC simplified both the taxi licence assignment form and the application for driver accreditation form. The TSC has now stopped accepting the old assignment and driver accreditation forms. Both updated forms can be downloaded from the TSC website at www.taxi.vic.gov.au.

Updating your details

Remember to contact the TSC if your contact information changes. Notifying VicRoads of your change of address or phone number is not sufficient to update your details with the TSC. You must contact the TSC directly.

In addition, the TSC is moving to electronic communications so make sure you provide an up-to-date email address and mobile phone number. **IT**

The Taxi Services Commission is the regulator of the Victorian taxi and hire car industry



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Taxi Fare Review 2016

Metropolitan Zone - fares unchanged

The Essential Services Commission (the Commission) is the independent economic regulator responsible for determining the maximum taxi fares that can be charged in the Melbourne metropolitan taxi zone (the metropolitan zone) and the urban and large regional taxi zone (the urban zone). They are required by legislation to review maximum taxi fares within two years of making a determination. Their last determination was made on 19 June 2014 and took effect on 1 July 2014.

Last month the Essential Services Commission released their Final Report on the 2016 Taxi Fare Review. A copy of the full report can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/project/transport/taxis/30278-taxi-fare-review-2016-2/> In part it states

In an increasingly competitive commercial passenger vehicle market, it is the responsibility of taxi service providers (rather than the taxi fare regulator) to respond to these circumstances by discounting fares, improving the services on offer, or both.

Importantly, if taxi service providers do not move to respond to greater competition, alternative service providers will see an opportunity to enter the commercial passenger vehicle market and consumers can benefit from this development.

Conversely, if we set maximum fares too low, there may not be sufficient incentives for investment in taxi services. This could lead to an undersupply of taxis relative to consumer demand for taxis, or insufficient investment in service quality offerings that taxi passengers may value.

It is preventing this potential outcome — namely, that fare regulation restricts the scope of taxi service providers from being able to compete effectively in the

commercial passenger vehicle market — that now serves as the main role for the Commission in reviewing maximum taxi fares.

TAXI FARES, SUPPLY AND SERVICE LEVELS

Taxi fares were increased by approximately 12.5 per cent on average in May 2014 as a result of our 2014 taxi fare review. From June 2014, when regulated caps on taxi licence numbers were removed, the supply of on-road taxis in the metropolitan zone increased over the remainder of 2014.

With a greater supply of taxis, customer wait times improved and there was also evidence of some improvement in customer satisfaction levels in a customer satisfaction index reported by the Taxi Services Commission.

Since we last reviewed fares in 2014, we have observed a reduction in cost indices representative of operational costs for taxis in the order of eight per cent. This is largely owing to lower LPG prices, which have fallen by 27 per cent in the Melbourne area since we last estimated a typical taxi operator's cost profile in March 2014. Similar reductions in LPG prices are apparent in

regional areas of Victoria.

In our draft report, we observed that the market outcomes — in particular, lower operating costs, declining demand for taxis and greater competition — suggested there is or would be increasing pressure on taxi service providers to compete through lower fares, improved service offerings, or a combination of both.

Given cost declines, we concluded that, on average, there should be sufficient scope within the current maximum taxi fares for taxi service providers to respond with competitive price and service offerings.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS AND THE COMMISSION'S RESPONSES

We received a number of submissions relating to our draft decisions for the metropolitan zone. In addition, we sought feedback through meetings with stakeholders during the consultation period and held a public forum to canvass stakeholder views.

Taxicorp submitted that pre-booked fares should be deregulated:

The Essential Services Commission is the independent economic regulator of the taxi industry.

"It is as clear as day turning into night that complete deregulation of all pre-booked pricing is required to allow taxi services to also provide dynamic pricing in line with the prevailing supply/demand for taxi services."

The Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) submitted that significant change to taxi industry regulation (including fare regulation) is required given the development of external competition.

"...the most significant shift that has occurred is the existence of genuine external competition, reducing the need for Government intervention. Much of the existing regulation, including fare regulation, is premised on the notion that there was a lack of external competition to taxi services."

The Taxi Services Commission (TSC) suggested that consumers would be better served by the ESC effectively giving taxi service providers responsibility for setting their own fares, arguing competition in the commercial passenger vehicle market is now sufficient to keep fares low.

"...the ESC proposes to continue to exert a level of control over prices for commercial passenger vehicle services that, in the opinion of the commission, is not in the long-term interests of consumers... Competition in the commercial passenger vehicle is now sufficient for the ESC to accede responsibility for setting prices to service providers."

The TSC suggested this could be achieved by setting a single fare structure with maximum rates set sufficiently high to allow flexibility for taxi service providers to set different types of fares within these maximums.

The TSC suggested an example of such a maximum fare structure could be a flagfall of \$7.50, distance rate of \$2.50 per kilometre and a time rate of \$1 per minute, with no prescription on when and how each of these rates must be applied to different types of trips.

The TSC saw the advantages of such an approach as being that it would allow or encourage some of the kinds

of fare flexibility addressed by the Commission in the draft report (such as fixed fares and hybrid fare structures), without requiring a high level of prescription.

As already noted, the Commission considers that risks remain in relying on competitive discounting to keep taxi fares low for consumers outside peak times, most notably for taxis procured in the rank and hail market.

There has been no evidence of sustained or widespread discounting to date. We are hopeful this will change, particularly once modern fare device (i.e. taximeter) specifications are finalised by the TSC.

In our cost analysis, the Commission has found that costs for key inputs into taxi operation have fallen overall, largely as a result of lower fuel prices.

For this reason, increasing fare maximums due to increases in the general price level in the economy (as measured by CPI) without any allowance for changes in taxi specific costs, or changes in the productivity of taxi services, would be inconsistent with setting fares to promote efficient provision and use of taxi services.

PEAK TARIFF MAXIMUM FARES FROM 7PM ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS

There was a mixed reaction from stakeholders to the proposed change to the timing of peak tariff rates.

Some submissions, including the VTA's, supported the change to timing.

The TSC suggested that its proposal for a single higher maximum tariff to apply at all times would better serve consumers' interests. It referred to its own analysis that customer waiting times for taxis on weekday afternoons were longer than those the ESC is trying to address by starting the peak tariff at 7pm on Fridays and Saturdays.

In our stakeholder meetings and at the public forum, the Victorian Taxi and Hire Car Families did not support the proposed change on the basis that higher fares earlier in the evening would be

detrimental to family groups catching taxis at these times.

At the public forum, further concern was raised by most stakeholders that the additional financial incentive was relatively insignificant and would not have the Commission's intended effect of inducing more taxis to operate at these times. Taxi operators noted difficulty in sourcing drivers for a range of reasons that may not be easily addressed through adjustments to fares.

In particular, operators suggested the requirement for taxi drivers to pass the Knowledge Test was resulting in many potential taxi drivers choosing to drive on the UberX platform instead. Stakeholders also noted that many drivers and operators prefer not to operate on Friday and Saturday nights due to risks of unsociable passenger behaviour and damage to the vehicle.

On balance, given the mixed stakeholder feedback on this proposal and remaining uncertainty as to whether commencing the peak tariff earlier would have the intended effect of inducing greater taxi supply (that is, better service for customers), the Commission has decided not to proceed with its draft decision to bring the peak period forward from 10pm to 7pm.

MAXIMUM PEAK BOOKING CHARGE

The conditional proposal to allow a maximum peak booking charge generated significant comment from stakeholders. Views on its merit were mixed, including some strong opposition to the idea and some apparent misconception of its details.

Those in favour of the charge pointed towards its usefulness as a step towards a greater deregulation of fares for pre-booked vehicles:

The \$10 maximum peak booking charge proposal is sound in principle where a cap on pre-booked fares exists. However, we advocate a complete removal of the cap on pre-booked fares.

continued next page --->

INDUSTRY UPDATE



Taxi Fare Review 2016 - Metropolitan Zonecontinued

The Victorian Taxi Association was in favour of the proposal. However, it submitted that the implementation should be left to the market and that its support was on the condition that networks would be responsible for setting the level of the charge:

If, as argued, it is designed to allow taxi companies to better match supply and demand and act as an incentive for drivers to be out on the roads, should it not be left to the very companies with the information available to achieve this to make decisions as to when this needs to be applied?

The VTA agrees and wants to confirm our view that this [the network] is the only level at which the objectives of the recommendation can be met, namely that supply and demand can be better equated, that incentives can be created for drivers to be on the road and that passengers can be informed about the implications at the time of booking.

Further arguments for extending the charge to non-peak times included that it would promote better servicing of short fares in the suburbs:

Empowering the consumer to bid up a fare if a taxi has to travel longer distances to pick up is a fairer way to charge rather than imposing an arbitrary peak charge on the consumers. This facility of consumer empowerment needs to be provided at any time a taxi is pre-booked, not just at peak periods.

Those against the introduction of the charge argued that it would make taxi fares uncompetitive in the face of increasing competition from commercial passenger vehicle services.

Further concern about the possible effects of such a charge was expressed

at the Commission's public forum by a number of stakeholders. In particular, the position was put that the proposed peak charge would not be large enough to be effective in inducing greater taxi availability at these times.

In our meetings with stakeholders, and at the public forum, some stakeholders expressed doubt about the ability of networks to provide better services, such as booking guarantees.

Some suggested that a booking cancellation fee would be a more effective way of improving the reliability of taxi bookings.

Stakeholders indicated a key issue affecting reliability is that at peak times some passengers book taxis with multiple networks and then take the first taxi that arrives.

As a result, drivers can be reluctant to service bookings at peak times for fear of turning up to the booking location and there being no passenger.

COMMISSION RESPONSE

In the absence of stronger industry support and practical examples of implementation benefits, the Commission is concerned that the benefits of the change would be outweighed by the costs.

The costs include the negative perception that 'all fares would rise' without any improvement in service quality, which may encourage unwarranted switching to alternative services.

Our final decision is therefore not to

proceed with the introduction of a maximum peak booking charge at this time.

PEAK TARIFF MAXIMUM FARES ON THE NIGHTS PRIOR TO PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The majority of submissions from stakeholders did not directly comment on taxi fares for public holidays. However, the stakeholders that did comment on our draft decision on public holiday fares expressed support for our proposed approach.

The Commission's analysis suggested that changes to bring forward the higher peak charges to the night before public holidays would promote a better balance of supply and demand at these times.

Given the support in submissions for this proposal, the Commission is inclined to maintain its draft decision.

Further analysis by the Commission estimates that this proposal could increase taxi revenues by around \$1.4 million (roughly \$300 per taxi). We understand the cost of meter reprogramming for most taximeters used in Victoria is in the order of \$150.

On balance, the Commission is not confident that the benefits generated from this proposal alone would outweigh the associated costs, such as taximeter reprogramming. The Commission will therefore not proceed with the draft decision at this time. However, we will consider this issue in future if it can be incorporated in combination with broader changes. **TT**

ESC Final decisions' report

can be read and downloaded at <http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/project/transport/taxis/30278-taxi-fare-review-2016-2/> **TT**

The Essential Services Commission is the independent economic regulator of the taxi industry.

Taxi Fare Review 2016

Urban Zone - most proposals accepted

In our consultation with stakeholders, representatives of some of the urban networks stated a preference for fare regulation for their areas to move to a price notification framework, which is currently applied in regional and country taxi zones.

The Commission is not in a position to implement fare deregulation by removing maximum taxi fares. Consequently, we do not respond specifically to these comments as part of this review.

NO CHANGE TO FARES OUTSIDE OF PEAK OR HOLIDAY PERIODS

Our further calculations indicate that the change in the total cost index resulting from the VTA's estimated cost increases are relatively small compared to the reduction resulting from the fall in LPG prices:

- *The VTA provided an estimate of \$700 in additional insurance costs due to the implementation of the implied conditions for driver arrangement. Using the mid-point estimate of comprehensive insurance costs for 2014 from the draft report of \$3420, this additional cost represents a 20 per cent increase in comprehensive insurance costs. The cost weight of comprehensive insurance is 6.1 per cent, implying an overall increase in the total cost index of 1.2 per cent.*
- *The VTA indicated that registration for WAT vehicles has increased by 8.9 per cent. The cost weight for registration is 3.9 per cent implying an overall increase in the total cost index of 0.4 per cent.*
- *The VTA also provided a worked example of changes in workers compensation insurance costs. It showed an increase from \$2.49*

in May 2014 to \$2.90 today for a \$300 metered fare. This example suggests an increase of 16.5 per cent in workers compensation insurance costs. The cost weight for workers compensation insurance is 1.5 per cent, implying an overall increase in the total cost index of 0.3 per cent.

It is apparent that, in total, these cost increases fall short of the cost reductions resulting from the fall in LPG prices. The Commission's estimate of the change in the aggregate cost index was a decline of 7.9 per cent.

This cost reduction was largely driven by a 27 per cent fall in LPG costs in Melbourne between March 2014 and December 2015.

In conclusion, the Commission remains of the view that the total costs incurred by operators in the urban zone are likely to have fallen over the period since the last fare review.

EXTENSION OF THE LATE NIGHT FEE PERIOD AND HOLIDAY RATES

To encourage more taxi service providers to operate during peak times on Friday and Saturday nights, we proposed to commence the late night fee period earlier on Friday and Saturday nights – from 7pm instead of from midnight – in our draft report. Further, we proposed to extend the holiday rate to the evenings before public holidays from 7pm and through to 6am on the day of the public holiday.

Unlike in metropolitan areas, the response we received from stakeholders to this draft decision during the consultation period was generally positive.

Given the support for the intent of this decision, we have decided to proceed with our draft decision to extend the late night fee period and allow the holiday rate to be charged on evenings prior to public holidays. **TT**

Urban Zone final decisions

Maximum fares for the areas of Dandenong, Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula will continue to be consistent with maximum fares in the metropolitan zone.

In Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, there will be no change to maximum fares outside periods when a late night fee or holiday rate may be charged.

In Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, the period during which a late night fee may be charged will be from 7pm on Fridays and Saturdays to 6am on the morning immediately following; and from midnight to 6am on all other days (instead of from midnight to 6am on all days currently). The maximum charge for a late night fee will remain capped at \$3.40.

In Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, the holiday rate will be able to be charged from 7pm on the evenings prior to all public holidays, for the relevant area, appointed under the Public Holidays Act 1993, until 6am on the morning immediately following. The maximum charge for a holiday rate will remain capped at \$4.20.

In Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, the holiday rate of \$4.20 will continue to apply all day Christmas Day and Boxing Day, from 6pm on New Year's Eve and all day New Year's Day (but not after 6am on other public holidays). **TT**

Taxi Fare Review 2016

Other Matters

FARE FLEXIBILITY

The minimal comment from most stakeholders in providing more flexible fares other than the peak booking charge may be an indication that current maximum fares are not the most material constraint on fare innovation.

In this context, the Commission has observed a number of recent developments in booked taxi fare offerings.

As noted in our draft report, GoCatch and Ingogo taxi apps allow customers to offer a 'tip' to taxi drivers to encourage drivers to service the booking. We understand owners of the iHail app intend to include similar functionality in their app through a 'queue jump fee'.

A more recent development that has occurred since the release of our draft report, is the introduction of fixed fares for taxis by Ingogo. We understand that passengers are offered the fixed fare based on an estimation of the applicable maximum fares. Information on Ingogo's website suggests it calculates fixed fares using a 'complex algorithm' which acts like a meter:

Like a normal taxi meter, we look at things like distance travelled, time of day and day of the week, however, we're also now through a variety of fantastic mapping and other technologies, able to consider many other types of information e.g. optimal routes to get the passenger to their destination, real-time and predicted traffic patterns, road and airport tolls, etc.

Ingogo has also now introduced cancellation fees for customers that book

a taxi but do not show for the booking, and driver penalties for not showing up for bookings.

Whether such offerings are wholly consistent with the maximum fare legislative framework is unclear and may be a matter for the industry regulator. However, the introduction of fixed fees and cancellation fees illustrates that such fare flexibility is technologically (and at least potentially commercially) feasible.

Given recent market developments, we

consider that there is likely to be greater pressure on taxis to price competitively.

Going forward, we are keen to ensure that technological constraints (such as existing taximeters) and regulatory constraints (such as prescriptive price structures) do not impede taxi service providers from developing innovative offerings.

The Commission reiterates its willingness to engage with taxi service providers on how flexibility can be offered in a way that promotes consumer interests.



The Essential Services Commission is the independent economic regulator of the taxi industry.

FARES FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

During the consultation period, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) raised with the Commission the issue of whether regulated fares could better facilitate the provision of WATs for passengers in a wheelchair.

It noted that consultation undertaken as part of DEDJTR's review of the MPTP had identified ongoing service delivery issues with WATs, including long wait times and unreliable services.

We understand consultation on the MPTP review was completed in late 2015.

The TSC's submission to our draft report expressed concern about the decline in WAT licences and predicts this trend will continue. The TSC's submission suggested that their idea of a

single (higher) maximum fare structure for all taxis would improve the financial viability of operators of vehicles such as WATs.

COMMISSION RESPONSE

Ensuring an appropriate supply of vehicles to service passengers in a wheelchair is a complex policy challenge. How we regulate taxi fares is only one part of this challenge.

The Commission is not convinced by the Taxi Services Commission's submission that the financial viability of WATs could be improved by a 'one size fits all' approach – that is, the TSC's proposal to set one maximum taxi fare across all taxis and at a high level. The submission simply asserts that such a fare structure would translate into incentives to operate WATs or service wheelchair passengers over conventional taxi work.

The Taxi Industry Inquiry recognised that without targeted government intervention, the market alone is unlikely to provide for the transport needs of mobility disadvantaged passengers. It also noted that:

The accumulation of different regulations, grants, incentive payments and subsidies to support the provision of wheelchair taxis and subsidised taxi travel for consumers with a disability has become multi-layered, confusing, restrictive and in some cases, ineffective.

The Commission's view is that a holistic consideration of the appropriate mix of policy instruments is still the best way to ensure an efficient and reliable supply of WATs to service wheelchair passengers. **TT**

Next Steps

The Commission's final decision for this review means that no changes will be made to metropolitan maximum taxi fares at this time.

However the proposed changes to maximum fares for the areas of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo outlined in this report will proceed.

Consequently, the Commission will issue a new taxi fare determination and associated schedule of hiring rates (the determination). The new schedule of hiring rates will become effective as of 1 July 2016.


There are some remaining matters we intend to address following the completion of this review. In particular, once we have had the opportunity to seek initial stakeholder feedback on the Airport Rank Fee issue raised in Melbourne Airport's late submission, we will make a decision on how best to proceed with a suitable consultation process and decision.

Additionally, we note that much of the wording of the current schedule of hiring rates has been carried over from previous determinations.

Updates to some clauses may be beneficial to reflect recent changes to regulations and technological developments.

In the time available for this review, we have not had the opportunity to consult all stakeholders on any substantive updates. We intend to undertake consultation on these updates before our next taxi fare review. **TT**

Monash Freeway Speed Trials



A new state-of-the-art approach to speed management, that will see speed limits change in response to road conditions, such as an increase or decrease in traffic volumes, weather conditions and the time of day, is to be implemented on the Monash Freeway.

The Dynamic Speed Trial – which starts in early July, running between High Street in Ashburton and Glenferrie Road in Toorak – means motorists, when it is safe to do so, will be able to increase their speed from 80 km/h to 100km/h on this section of the Monash Freeway.

The innovative approach will use the existing technology including CCTV and road sensors as well as overhead electronic signs, to change speed limits when conditions allow, not just if there are road works or a collision.

The six month pilot will trial three different phases:

- phase one will vary speeds at night,
- phase two will include night and off-peak periods such as weekends,
- phase three will run 24-hours a day, including peak periods.

The pilot will complement the Monash Speed Trial – a trial that will see trucks travel at 90km/h along a 10 kilometre section of the Monash Freeway between Huntingdale Road and Jacksons Road.

The Monash Speed Trial will run for 18 months, with a second trial phase banning trucks from the right hand lane alongside the 90km/h speed limit in order – to evaluate the effectiveness of the two measures together.

Reducing the speed that trucks are travelling will create greater distances between cars and trucks and allow cars to navigate safely around trucks.

“Around 80 per cent of all crashes on the Monash are either rear end crashes or side swipe crashes – so we’re looking at innovative ways to make Victorian roads safer,” said Minister for Roads Luke Donnellan.

The trial’s focus will determine the effectiveness of reducing the speed limit for trucks to improve road safety and reduce the number of crashes involving cars and trucks.

Results from both trials will be independently examined and will be used to help inform future decisions around speed, allowing us to make the most of the state’s road network.

“We support the Monash Speed Trial because we believe speed reductions here have the potential to create productivity and safety improvements for operators, which is good for business,” said Victorian Transport Association CEO Peter Anderson. **TT**

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Peter Mac's new home

305 Grattan Street Parkville

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre has relocated to the newly completed \$1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) in Parkville - the gateway to the city and Melbourne's health and research precinct.




The VCCC facility is purpose-built for cancer research, treatment, education and care new cancer research and clinical services for Melbourne Health, new research facilities for The University of Melbourne and education facilities for all building partners.

The development comprises a new 13-storey building bordering Flemington Road, Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street, and construction of four new floors on top of the existing Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH).

The new building and extension to RMH is linked by covered bridges across Grattan Street, allowing patients, visitors and staff to move between the buildings.


Key features of Peter MacCallum's new home are:-

- 92 overnight inpatient beds.
- 110 chemotherapy, same day beds and chairs.
- 42-bed capacity intensive care unit.
- a dedicated clinical trials unit with 24 clinical trial spaces.
- eight refurbished medi-hotel beds, with additional space for overnight accommodation for country patients, their families and carers.
- Six operating theatres and two procedures rooms.
- Eight radiation therapy bunkers with six linear accelerators
- Education and training facilities including 47 seminar and meeting spaces and three lecture theatres.
- A central atrium as the building's navigational touchstone. Light filled and extending up through the centre of the building, it will ensure an intuitive point for patients, visitors and staff to orientate and navigate the building. 

Facility entrances

The main pedestrian entrance to the VCCC is on Grattan Street, between Elizabeth Street and Flemington Road. This includes a drop off zone and a taxi rank area.

There is a smaller entrance for pedestrians on Elizabeth Street.

Access to and from the underground 700 space car park is from Flemington Road only. 

Basil Sellers Art Prize Exhibition

The seventeen finalists will exhibit at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, Swanston Street, Parkville

19 July - 6 November

The Basil Sellers Art Prize encourages artists to take on the theme of sport in any artistic medium and supports artists whose work explores Australia's obsession with sport.



Trent Parke and Narelle Autio - **The Summation of Force**, (detail) 2016
dimensions variable single channel video, oil on canvas, concertina books
© Courtesy the artists

Fiona McMonagle - **The Huddle**, (detail) 2016
Digital print cut outs on di-bond, sound dimensions variable
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2 July	MFB 125th Anniversary Gala Ball - The evening will include a three course meal, beverages and entertainment. MCs for the night are Melbourne radio icons Grubby and Dee Dee. The evening will also feature The Absolutely 80s Show featuring Scott Carne, Dale Ryder, David Sterry, Sean Kelly and Grace Knight. A charity auction will be held to raise funds for beyondblue.
3 - 5 July	Associations Forum National Conference 2016 - is widely recognised as the premier meeting for the association sector in Australia and New Zealand. An impressive line-up of speakers includes John Brogden from AICD, Tim Costello from World Vision and, just three days after the federal election, Andrew Giles MP and Senator James Paterson will join Troy Bramston, senior writer and columnist with The Australian, for what is sure to be a lively discussion on 'Associations and Politics'.
29 July	Kiss The Rain - Yiruma Live in Melbourne - a Korean contemporary classical musician who combines melodious Korean compositions with inspiration and emotion. His simple, yet melodic and emotional pieces resonate well with the modern listener; millions around the world are moved by his music. Be prepared to be enchanted by a magical evening of beautiful, touching renditions of Yiruma's most popular and loved melodies!
30 July	David Icke Wake Up Worldwide Tour - Since the early nineties, David Icke has made it his life's mission to inform his readers and fans of an impending global fascist state. Alerting the masses to plans for a Third World War that will result in a singular force which will rule over all of humanity on planet earth. A New World Order that we see unfolding before our very eyes today. Featuring information assimilated through 25 years of in-depth research, with over twenty bestselling books and millions of fans worldwide, events that are guaranteed to inspire genuine thought and questioning!



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<https://www.iru.org/what-we-do/events/iru-international-taxi-forum-business-reception>

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- Over the phone: **1300 360 962** (8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday).
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Western Link	\$6.00
Southern Link	\$6.00
Both links	\$7.50
Eastern Avenue only (Exhibition Street Extension)	No toll
EastLink	
Melton Tunnel or Mulrum Mullen Tunnel	\$2.77
Any part of EastLink south of Marcondah Hwy	\$2.61
One tunnel plus any part of EastLink south of Marcondah Hwy	\$5.38
Regional Routes	No toll

Prices are GST inclusive and taxi tolls are valid from 1 July 2016 until 30 June 2017.

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<p>Until 31 July</p> 	<p>200 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN FASHION - From the early dressmaking establishments of Brisbane to the mid-century salons of Collins Street, to the contemporary studios by Bondi's beaches, 200 Years of Australian Fashion traverses over two centuries of fashion design in Australia. Over 120 works from more than ninety designers are presented in this exhibition.</p>	<p>Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia Federation Square Corner of Russell and Flinders Streets</p>
<p>Until 18 September</p> 	<p>DEGAS: A NEW VISION - This sweeping exhibition brings together more than 200 works by Degas from dozens of collections worldwide, offering a fresh and dynamic reappraisal of this legendary artist's genius. The art he made over more than fifty years of constant creativity and renewal embraces painting, drawing, print-making, monotypes, sculpture and photography, and has had an immense impact on modern and contemporary art.</p>	<p>NGV International 180 St Kilda Road Southbank</p>
<p>Until 18 September</p> 	<p>SCORSESE - From <i>Taxi Driver</i> and <i>Goodfellas</i> to <i>The Age of Innocence</i> and <i>The Wolf of Wall Street</i>, Martin Scorsese's intense and exhilarating films define him as one of the world's greatest directors. Drawn from Scorsese's personal collection, and featuring over 600 objects and a rich selection of footage from across the director's work.</p>	<p>Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) Federation Square Corner of Swanston & Flinders Streets</p>
<p>Until 9 October</p> 	<p>JURASSIC WORLD: THE EXHIBITION! Based on one of the biggest blockbusters in cinema history, the Exhibition immerses audiences of all ages in scenes inspired by the beloved film. Now, the park that was only a promise comes to life... right before your eyes.</p>	<p>Melbourne Museum 11 Nicholson Street Carlton</p>
<p>19 July to 6 November</p> 	<p>2016 BASIL SELLERS ART PRIZE EXHIBITION - The winner of the \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize will be announced on 22 July. Over 240 artists from all over Australia submitted entries for the \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize, one of Australia's richest and most prestigious art awards. An additional \$5,000 Peoples' Choice award will be voted for by visitors to the exhibition.</p>	<p>Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne Swanston Street Parkville</p>
<p>23, 26 & 29 July</p> 	<p>2016 INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONS CUP - Powerhouse A-League team, Melbourne Victory, will host star European football clubs - England's Tottenham Hotspur and Italy's Juventus Football Club and newly announced Spain's Atletico de Madrid. It envisaged that over 200,000 fans will flock to the MCG for this series of three hotly contested matches.</p>	<p>MCG Yarra Park Jolimont</p>
<p>28 - 30 July</p> 	<p>MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - showcases the best in current cinema from around the world, as well as retrospectives, tributes and discussion programs. MIFF is committed to local talent and is Australia's largest showcase of new Australian cinema, and the country's most vocal champion of emerging and established local film-making talent. The festival also hosts many celebratory world premieres of local films.</p>	<p>Festival Hub @ Forum Theatre 154 Flinders Street Melbourne</p>



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