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MAGAZINE

Official journal of the Victorian Taxi Association
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JULY 2011

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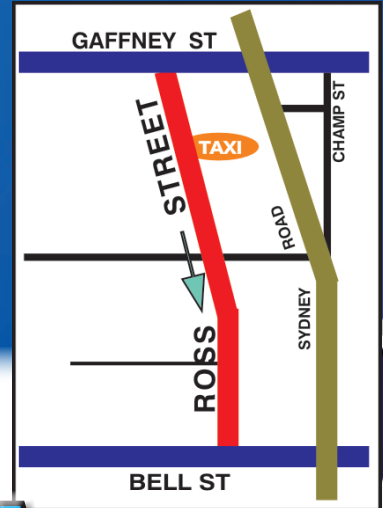
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Harsh, **very harsh,** Penalties

It is usually interesting to sit around a table and have a chat with a Government Minister. And so it was when representatives of the VTA met with public transport minister Terry Mulder in early June.

Discussion covered a number of matters, including taxi safety cameras, taxi fares, the taxi industry Inquiry and the Taxi Services Commission, taxis using bus lanes, and aspects of changes to public transport administration.

Included in this *Taxi Talk* edition are extracts from Hansard (the record of proceedings of Parliament) related to the Transport Legislation Amendment (Taxi Services Reform and other Matters) Bill 2011.

It is recommended that you take the time to read these extracts to gain an understanding of what the Government is thinking and where resultant actions could lead.

The VTA has told the Minister that it is disappointed that the Second Reading speech came across as being so negative about most (compared to many) taxi operators and drivers. If reforms to the industry are to be successful driver and operator involvement is paramount. Unqualified criticism will not achieve the co-operation of stakeholders that is necessary to ensure good customer service outcomes above and beyond what is already being delivered. It is fair to say that the feedback the VTA has had from operators and drivers since the second reading speech is one of confusion and anger. Many are damn well annoyed about the approach being taken.

The VTA remains deeply concerned about the coercive powers of the Commission. It sees these as excessive and far too open ended, particularly because they apply to any "person". This cloud over everyone's head could well lead to secrecy and mistrust within the industry as well as between the industry and Government, instead of the intended outcome of transparency, openness and co-operative development.

The penalties are harsh, very harsh. If a person refuses to provide the Commission with information as prescribed by the legislation, a penalty of up to \$14,656 (penalty value 2011/12) could be imposed. If the person gives false or misleading information, the penalty again could be up to \$14,656 or up to 6 months imprisonment.

Not only could such penalties be applied, but accredited taxi industry people could lose their



accreditation(s). Talk about a double whammy.

However, provided no one misses the bell, by the time this *Taxi Talk* edition hits the streets, the bill will probably have passed into law. As to what amendments might be made during its passage through Parliament, I am unable to say.

Whilst the Inquiry will do its job, it should not be forgotten by anyone that the following is the reality:

- Yes, the industry is regulated, but the operation is commercial and is not subsidized by Government
- Drivers and operators are poorly rewarded given their training, effort, investment and risk
- Taxis are NOT mass transport providers, so can't possibly replace trams trains and buses late on Friday and Saturday nights or after major events

- Licence assignment fees drive licence price, not the other way around
- Government is by far the largest "assignor" of taxi licences
- Taxis cannot magically bypass delays resulting from traffic congestion
- Taxi drivers are exposed to the worst kind of anti-social and discriminatory behaviour
- The expectations of many passengers are inconsistent with what a taxi is, what a taxi is capable of, and what the real price of the service needs to be
- The Victorian taxi industry does a fantastic job in servicing the community
- The industry's failure rate is a very tiny 0.01% of people carried, that's one complaint for every 8000 people carried, and not all complaints are legitimate.

The VTA is working with a range of experts to assist it in progressively feeding information and analysis into the Inquiry, as well as researching and developing its own solutions for protecting and improving the perception, performance and stability of the industry.

Just so there is no misunderstanding and for the record, the VTA has and continues to support the holding of an Inquiry into the Victorian taxi industry. What is bewildering though is the creation of the Taxi Services Commission before the Taxi Industry Inquiry has completed its work and reported its findings and recommendations.

As Paul McCartney wrote in that great song, it's going to be "*The Long and Winding Road*".

Neil Sach
VTA CEO ❖

Greater Melbourne taxi licence release update

In accordance with section 143A(8) of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 and GMTLR Procedural Rule 18, the last date that WAT fixed term licences can be granted is 13 September 2011. Any application that has not been granted by this date must be refused.

Licence may be issued before vehicle delivery

The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) is aware of current issues with vehicle supply which may see the delivery of vehicles that you have ordered delayed beyond 13 September 2011. It is recommended that you enquire with your motor vehicle dealer to ensure that your vehicle(s) will be delivered by 13 September 2011.

However, if this is not possible and your vehicle will not be delivered for operation by 13 September 2011,

the Director of Public Transport (Director) may grant your licence(s) before your vehicle is delivered.

You may be granted a licence before delivery of your vehicle, providing you have prior to 13 September 2011:

- obtained accreditation as a taxi-cab licence holder and operator (unless you already have these accreditations);
- provided evidence that you own (or intend to own) a vehicle that complies with the vehicle specifications for WATs to operate under a WAT Licence (see Extension of time section below); and
- paid the balance of the first year instalment of the licence fee for a WAT Licence.

Note that your application will be refused if you have not obtained accreditation as a taxi-cab licence holder and operator and paid the balance of the first annual instalment of the licence fee before 4:30pm 13 September 2011.

Extension of time – letter from vehicle dealer required

If you have been advised that your vehicle(s) will not (or may not) be available by the 13 September 2011 and you wish to be granted your WAT fixed term licence(s), you will require an extension of time until 13 September 2011 to pay the balance of the first annual instalment of the licence fee and obtain licence holder and operator accreditation.

For the Director to consider granting you an extension, you must provide a letter from your dealer stating the revised estimated date of delivery.

Issue of licence – ten year term begins on 13 September 2011

If you have paid the first annual instalment of the licence fee and obtained industry accreditation, but your vehicle is not yet ready for operation by 13 September 2011, you will be granted a fixed term WAT licence. The fixed-term of 10 years will commence on 13 September 2011. This means that if your vehicle is delivered for operation on 13 October 2011 for example, your licence will be operable for 9 years and 11 months and not the full term of 10 years.

Please note that, even if your licence is issued on 13 September 2011, you will not be able to operate the licence until your vehicle is delivered. Therefore, it is in your interest to do all that you can to ensure that your vehicle is ready for operation as soon as possible after 13 September 2011.

If you have any further questions contact the Victorian Taxi Directorate on 1800 638 802 (toll-free). ❀

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Potential new demand

The taxi industry is a service industry for the transport of people. As Melbourne grows in population so the potential demand for taxi services grows. It is therefore encouraging to see the Minister for Planning (Matthew Guy) announcing new developments near to Melbourne.

Aston, the first of four new communities to be developed in Melbourne's north comprises more than 1,700 lots for approximately 4,000 residents within the Craigieburn Precinct Structure Plan, which is located 26 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD on Craigieburn Road.

The Minister has also approved the construction of a multi-storey residential development at 10 Moreland Street within the Joseph Road precinct at Footscray. The \$90 million development will comprise a 25 storey (80 metres) residential building including 222 apartments with an active ground floor retail element and underground car parking for 150 vehicles. He has also approved the development of a 15-storey office building to house the operations of the National Australia Bank (NAB) at 700 Bourke Street, Docklands adjacent to Southern Cross Station and Etihad Stadium.

The development, valued at \$400 million, will feature 64,000 square metres of floor area including a child-care centre, concourse level retail, a public auditorium and accessible public thoroughways.

The Minister said that it will be an iconic building that identifies the start of Docklands and incorporate high-quality public and retail spaces reinforcing Docklands as a key business location. ❖



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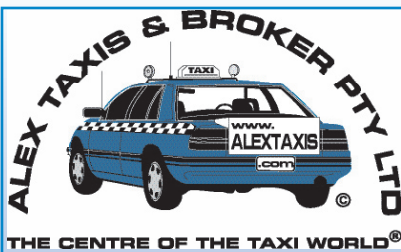
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Food charities such as Cornerstone in Dandenong feed thousands of Melburnians each week.

Feed Melbourne

Food is one of our most basic needs but even in a comparatively rich state such as Victoria, 370,000 people cannot afford to feed themselves or their families.

The solution seems to be close at hand: each year in Victoria supermarkets, restaurants and the food industry throw away more than 700,000 tonnes of food (sources: VLGA and Community Food Programs April 2011 report by food charities).

The challenge is to "rescue", store, cook and deliver this food to where it is needed, and this costs money.

FareShare is a major Melbourne food charity working in this area and is co-partner with Leader

● by Nick Miller

Community Newspapers in the Feed Melbourne campaign.

FareShare chief executive officer Marcus Godinho said: "More men and women are turning to Melbourne charities for a meal or a food parcel to take home than 12 months ago.

"Fortunately, more businesses are donating their surplus quality food to community food programs to help them respond to this need.

"Two-thirds of food used by charities for food parcels and to serve meals is now donated.

"However, there's so much perfectly good food that is still being thrown out that charities shouldn't need to buy any food."

In the past two years Feed Melbourne has helped fill the gaps in the charity food chain.

Dozens of food charities have received Feed Melbourne grants to buy refrigerators, freezers, shelving and other essential equipment.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation is the new major partner for Feed Melbourne. Chief executive Andrew Chappell said the Foundation was committed to supporting charities on the front line caring for Melbourne's most disadvantaged.

"Feed Melbourne is an important fund-raising appeal for Melbourne. With the increase in the cost of living, thousands of people are struggling to purchase food, and turn to

food programs for assistance," Mr Chappell said.

Leader editor-in-chief John Trevorrow said: "Too many people in Melbourne go hungry.

"They might not be able to afford food for a day or two, or their need might be constant.

"Feed Melbourne can help. By donating, you help food charities rescue food that would otherwise go to waste in landfill, and distribute it to those doing it tough."

Every dollar donated to Feed Melbourne is awarded to food charities.

* For more information visit www.feedmelbourne.org.au ❀

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DAVID SAMUEL
VTA Policy and Communications

“As the VTA has pointed out in its submission to the Fel’s led Taxi Inquiry, discussions involving safety in taxis need to focus on driver safety.”

Is it time for the taxi regulator to be given the power to sanction passengers?

On top of a recent spate of serious assaults on our drivers, the industry seems to be saying that it is time that the VTD not only sanctioned drivers who do the wrong thing, but also passengers.

As the VTA has pointed out in its submission to the Fel’s led Taxi Inquiry, discussions involving safety in taxis need to focus on driver safety. The simple reason for this is that this is where the evidence shows us there is a problem. While it is hard to get exact figures out of the VTD, at last report the VTA was told that on average 9 camera downloads a week were being conducted. This represents a concerning number of serious offences being perpetrated against drivers.

The VTD has demonstrated a genuine commitment to improving driver safety over the last 3 years, and many would argue there is not a lot more they can do at a practical level. However, the VTA is considering the merit of suggesting that Traffic Safety Officers (TSOs) be given the power to issue infringements to passengers who behave inappropriately and /or refuse to pay to further strengthen existing measures.

Not only would this help reduce the risk of assaults on drivers, but it may also help to build a bridge in the often tense relationship between drivers and TSOs. The current one dimensional role of the TSO has created a perception in the driver community that TSOs are out to get drivers, not help them. The VTA’s suggestions could help change this percep-

tion, and importantly help TSOs better understand the challenges drivers face – particularly late at night and during high demand periods.

Recent comments posted on Twitter and Facebook by the Inquiry team raise another interesting question. Are the communication skills of the driver an effective weapon against being assaulted by an aggressive passenger? The obvious answer is yes. At least having good communication skills and knowing how to talk to people in certain circumstances couldn’t hurt.

Having said this, one must account for other important factors including increased drug use in society generally which makes it harder to rationalise with an aggressive passenger. Further, an unjustified campaign by certain sections of the media and other commentators has reduced respect for our drivers.

From a policy point of view, the VTA will continue to argue that if you want more skilled drivers, not just in terms of communication skills but more generally, we must retain more experienced drivers. Simply, the only way to do this is to offer appropriate incentives and reward for effort.

The VTA is interested in the views of all industry participants on the issue of increasing the power of TSOs and driver safety more generally. Please email any thoughts you might have to policy@victaxi.com.au or call me on 9676 2635. ❀

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Number of Taxi Licences

JUNE 2011

METROPOLITAN

4,233

(including 411 WAT vehicles)

COUNTRY

520

(including 113 WAT vehicles)

OUTER SUBURBAN

155

(including 28 WAT vehicles)

URBAN

237

(Ballarat - Bendigo - Geelong)
(including 35 WAT vehicles)

TOTAL

5,145

(including 587 WAT vehicles)

NUMBER OF DRIVERS

Active drivers

16,000 APPROX

Accredited drivers

25,000 APPROX

TAXI

\$507,500

transfers

\$56,056

HIRE CARS

avg metropolitan licence transfer value

Compliance

outcomes (1-31 May 2011)

Taxi Inspections	2,007
Rectification Notices	433
Infringement Notices	146
Notices of Unroadworthiness	36
Official Warnings	20

ASSIGNMENTS

metro taxis 107

LICENCE TRANSFERS

metro taxis	11
urban	0
country taxis	3
hire car licences	9
special licences	2

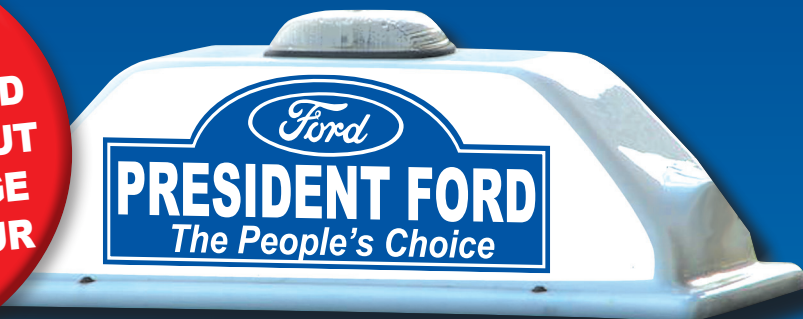
LICENCES ISSUED

taxi licences	50
hire car licences	1
special vehicles	1
RH vehicles	5

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Noel Granger

Noel Granger OAM, motor mechanic, taxi driver, taxi operator, Silver Top Taxis chairman, VTA councillor, VTA executive councillor, VTA vice president, motor cyclist, Olympic wrestler, aircraft pilot, and an all round gentleman, was lost to us on 9 June after a battle with cancer.



In 1956 Noel was a fit young amateur welterweight wrestler with Olympic games aspirations who trained under the legendary Dick Garrard in Geelong. Noel competed in the 1956 Olympic Games.

Dick owned and operated taxis and Noel commenced working in the taxi industry in the early sixties driving a taxi.

The opportunity to manage taxis for other licence holders arose when the Transport Regulation Board decided to allow a maximum of 7 taxis to be managed by experienced taxi industry personnel.

Noel formed a partnership with Tassie Revis and before long they were successfully managing 14 taxis from their modest Little Moray Street, South Melbourne premises.

Under the astute control of Noel and Tassie they pioneered taxi management in Victoria as well as investing in taxi licences whenever they became available.

By 1980 Taxi Staffing Richmond was to become the largest staffing management and service operation of its kind.

Noel became Silver Top Chairman in 1993 until 2003. During his period on the Board, Noel was a key figure in many technological advances that the industry experienced, such as the implementation of computer dispatch for taxis, fitting of security cameras, GPS and the introduction of EFTPOS facilities.

In June 1997, Noel was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to the community, particularly through the Victorian Taxi Association and in January 2001 he received the Centenary Medal for service to the community through charity.

Noel treated everybody in the same manner. It didn't matter if you were the Premier of the State, taxi operator, taxi driver or staff member – Noel always had time to listen to you.

The VTA and the wider taxi industry express its condolences to his wife Edith, daughter Debbie, and others of his family and close friends.

Rest in peace, Noel. ❀

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Gold Coast mum wins \$760k compensation

A Gold Coast mother has been awarded more than \$760,000 in what is thought to be the first time in Australia a taxi driver has been found negligent for failing to ensure an intoxicated passenger was delivered to the correct address.

Elizabeth French was awarded the payout in Brisbane Supreme Court on Friday, bringing to an end more than seven years of legal battles since her husband Stephen Crouch, 36, was killed on Currumburra Rd, Ashmore in May, 2003.

Mr Crouch and Ms French were at a party in Southport on May 31 when Ms French, who was heavily pregnant at the time, went home leaving her husband to drink with his friends.

Hours later, an intoxicated Mr Crouch was put into a cab by his mates who told the driver his address, however he was dropped at the wrong place and, in an attempt to get himself home, he was hit by two vehicles and died at the scene.

Justice George Fryberg on Friday found the cab driver, Stephen Earea, had left Mr Crouch lying on the side of Yangoora Crescent when he was unable to find his actual address.

Mr Earea called the police but left Mr Crouch shortly afterwards.



"Mr Earea ought reasonably to have known that if he failed to deliver Mr Crouch to his home or otherwise to a situation of safety, but left him lying on the footpath, there was a risk that Mr Crouch would wake up, wander on to the carriageway ... and be hit by a vehicle," Justice Fryberg said. "In the circumstances a reasonable person in Mr Earea's position would have confirmed and recorded the address and would

not have left Mr Crouch as Mr Earea did.

"Such a person would have allowed Mr Crouch to remain in the taxi until the police arrived or taken one of the other reasonable courses open in the circumstances."

Mr Earea died before the trial began, leaving his insurance company QBE to foot the bill after it "consented to be substituted for him in respect of the liability alleged against him".

The payout, however, will be shared by QBE and a nominal defendant after Justice Fryberg found Mr Crouch died after being hit by two vehicles on Currumburra Rd. The driver of the first vehicle did not stop and has never been found.

"I find that the breaches of duty of the driver of the unidentified vehicle caused Mr Crouch's death," Justice Fryberg said.

The payout will be split between Ms French and her four children.

Henry Tuttiett ❀

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Transport legislation

The following is the second reading of the bill introduced into the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Public Transport to create the Taxi Services Commission. It has been extracted from Hansard of Thursday 2 June, but with some layout changes to save space.



Terry Mulder, MP
Minister for Public Transport

“Mr MULDER (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill sets a course for major reform of Victoria's taxi services. The bill establishes a new Taxi Services Commission as the first phase of a complex and challenging reform process.

The commission will provide the legislative basis and the powers for the comprehensive inquiry into the taxi industry that is being conducted by Professor Allan Fels, AO.

The inquiry and its broad terms of reference were announced by the Premier in March and its work is already under way.

Once the inquiry has been completed, the commission will take over as the independent regulator of commercial passenger vehicles including taxi and hire cars.

Major reform of the Victorian taxi industry and its regulatory framework is desperately needed to arrest the serious ongoing decline in the standard of taxi services.

In the late 1990s under the Kennett government, Victoria's taxi services compared favourably with other jurisdictions. Now, however, a once-proud taxi industry is on a downward spiral after a decade of government inaction and regulatory failure.

Victorians are fed up with the never-ending problems in the taxi industry and the appalling reduc-

tion in levels of service over recent years. This has been highlighted by the latest report of the Department of Transport's customer satisfaction monitor, which saw overall satisfaction with taxi services fall to the lowest level since the surveys began six years ago.

While many taxi operators and drivers do a good job, the problems driving customer dissatisfaction are clear: the long queues for a taxi in the Melbourne CBD and other entertainment districts on a Friday or Saturday night, drivers who do not know where to go, taxis that do not turn up, drivers who will not accept a short fare, violent incidents and unsafe behaviour.

Victorians are embarrassed when a dirty taxi or a poorly trained driver gives international visitors an unfavourable first impression of Melbourne. They are angry when they hear that taxi licences cost up to half a million dollars while taxi drivers are earning less than the minimum wage.

The Victorian public supports the need for an inquiry and will be raising many issues that have been hindering the industry's performance.

Taxis have a unique and crucial role in the transport system. They are a vital link in the public trans-

port network, providing a flexible, point-to-point mode of transport that fills the gaps in fixed-route train, tram and bus services. In particular, taxis are the only mode of transport available to a range of groups which cannot drive a motor vehicle and cannot access other public transport services due to factors such as age, disability or where they live.

Victorians simply want to be able to get a taxi when they need one. They want the driver to know the way to their destination. They ask that the cab be clean and safe.

These are the basics of a good taxi service and that is what the Taxi Services Commission is being established to achieve. Victorians have had enough of governments fiddling around the edges, avoiding the real issues, endlessly talking about the problems and never fixing them.

This bill commits the government to real reform and real solutions: a safer, fairer and more rewarding job for taxi drivers, a more viable business for taxi operators, a more accountable and transparent taxi industry, and a vast improvement in the quality of taxi services deliv-

ered to customers.

The commission will be an independent statutory agency, structurally separate from the Department of Transport.

The bill establishes the commission as a body corporate in part 5 of the Transport Integration Act 2010 along with the other central transport bodies critical to our transport system.

The bill has four parts. Part 1 provides for preliminary matters such as the purpose and commencement provisions. Part 4 of the bill provides for the repeal of the amending act. Parts 2 and 3 of the bill set out the two major stages for the commission.

In its first stage, the commission will conduct the comprehensive inquiry. It is anticipated that the commission will provide a final report to government by mid-2012. During this stage, the commission will have the mandate to promote major and enduring change to the taxi and hire car industry.

The inquiry will cover the commercial passenger vehicle industry in its entirety. While taxis will be the focus of the inquiry, this broad scope means that the commission

is able to inquire into hire cars, restricted hire cars, special-purpose vehicles and public commercial passenger vehicles (including certain buses).

The commission will be able to inquire into the holders of commercial passenger vehicle licences, the operators of commercial passenger vehicles, providers of taxi network services, and ancillary matters such as the supply of relevant goods and services in the industry. This industry-wide approach will ensure the commission can comprehensively address systemic failures in the conduct, performance and regulation of the industry.

In its second stage, the commission will assume the role of the industry regulator and take responsibility for implementing the reforms decided by the government as a result of the inquiry.

This bill reflects the government's determination to ensure that Victoria once again has world-class taxi services.

I commend the bill to the house."

Terry Mulder, MP
Minister for Public Transport" ❖

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Etymology

Harry Nathaniel Allen of The New York Taxicab Co, who imported the first 600 gas-powered New York taxicabs from France, coined the word “taxicab” as a contraction of “taximeter cabriolet”. “Taximeter” is an adaptation of the French word *taximètre*, which is a derivation of the German word *taxameter*, coined from Medieval Latin *taxa*, which means tax/charge, together with *meter* from the Greek *metron* meaning measure. A “cabriolet” is a type of horse-drawn carriage.

Taximeters existed in ancient Rome, where they employed a mechanism that used the turning of the cart’s axle to release small balls. At the end of the trip, the passenger paid based on the number of released balls. The modern taximeter was invented by German Wilhelm Bruhn in 1891, and the Daimler Victoria—the world’s first meter-equipped (and gasoline-powered) taxicab—was built by Gottlieb Daimler in 1897.

Taximeters were originally mechanical and mounted outside the cab, above the driver’s side front wheel. Meters were soon relocated inside the taxi and in the

1980s electronic meters were introduced, doing away with the once-familiar ticking sound of the meter’s timing mechanism.

In some locations, taxicabs display a small illuminated sign indicating if they are vacant. In Argentina, this sign is called a “banderita” (little flag), a carryover term from the days of mechanical taximeters, in which a little flag was turned to wind up the mechanism. The flag would be hidden at the start of a trip and moved to the visible position at the end.

Horse-drawn for-hire hackney carriage services began operating in both Paris and London in the early 17th century. The first documented service was started by Nicolas Sauvage in Paris in 1640. His vehicles were known as *fiacres*, as the main vehicle depot apparently was opposite a shrine to Saint Fiacre. (The term *fiacre* is still used in French to describe a horse-drawn vehicle for hire, while the German term *Fiaker* is used, especially in Austria, to refer to the same thing). In London the Hackney Carriage Act (1635) became

the first legislated control in English on vehicles for hire. In the 19th century, Hansom cabs largely replaced the older designs because of their improved speed and safety.

Although battery-powered vehicles enjoyed a brief success in Paris, London and New York in the 1890s, the 1891 invention by German Wilhelm Bruhn of the taximeter (the familiar mechanical and now often electronic device that calculates the fare in most taxicabs) ushered in the modern taxi.

Gasoline-powered taxicabs began operating in Paris in 1899, in London in 1903, and in New York in 1907. The New York taxicabs were imported from France by Harry N. Allen. Allen was the first person to paint his taxicabs yellow, after learning that yellow is the colour most easily seen from a distance.

Taxicabs proliferated around the world in the early 20th century. The first major innovation after the invention of the taximeter occurred in the late 1940s, when two-way radios first appeared in taxicabs. Radios enabled taxicabs and dispatch offices to communicate and serve customers more efficiently than previous methods, such as using callboxes. The next major innovation occurred in the 1980s, when computer assisted dispatching was first introduced. ❀



NEW TAXI TOLLS FOR TRAVEL ON CITYLINK AND EASTLINK®

From July 1, 2011, there will be new taxi tolls for travel on CityLink and EastLink. Tolls are valid from July 1 2011 until further notice. GST inclusive.

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One beep followed by two short beeps: Your account balance is low and a top up payment is required.

Four beeps: Your account has been suspended or cancelled. You need to contact CityLink immediately. Any travel on CityLink or EastLink may result in the issue of a Late Toll invoice.

No beeps: Check that your e-TAG is positioned correctly. If it is positioned correctly and still not beeping, call CityLink immediately on 1300 360 962.

Please note: Payments made to accounts within the last 24 hours may not be reflected in the number of beeps when travelling on CityLink or EastLink.

Taxi tolls as at 1 July 2011



Western Link	\$4.60
Southern Link	\$4.60
Both Links	\$6.50
Batman Avenue Only (Exhibition Street Extension)	No toll



Melba tunnel or Mullum Mullum tunnel	\$2.48
Any part of EastLink south of Maroondah Hwy	\$2.33
One tunnel plus any part of EastLink south of Maroondah Hwy	\$4.81
Ringwood Bypass	No toll

The toll is to be paid to the driver in addition to the fare shown on the taxi meter.
Tolls can only be charged to passengers when the e-TAG is displayed in the vehicle.

Rural Taxi tolls as at 1 July 2011

A toll applies to all taxis using CityLink® and EastLink®. Taxis not fitted with a CityLink e-TAG® device or a Breeze® tag will need to purchase one of the following passes.



Passes:	CityLink Rural Taxi Pass (Ph: 1300 360 962)
Roads Covered:	Unlimited Travel on CityLink Only for 24 hours from first trip
Toll:	\$7.00*



Passes:	EastLink Trip Pass (Ph: 13 54 65)
Roads covered:	Valid for a single trip on EastLink in one direction only
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*CityLink tolls are only valid for Country (C) or Urban (U) plated taxis.

Please attach three passenger information stickers.
One to the dashboard and the inside of each side rear window.

Topping up your account

Easiest option: call CityLink to set up automatic payment.

- At the CityLink Customer Centre: 67 Lorimer Street, Docklands.
- At an EastLink Customer Centre: 2 Hillcrest Avenue, Ringwood. Top up amount will appear on your account by the end of next business day.
- Pay over the phone: 1300 360 962 (8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday).
- Use BPAY, touch machines at selected Newsagencies and Melbourne Airport.
- Cash payments at the Depot at Melbourne Airport or at any Victorian Australia Post.



Fight the good fight ... online

The invasion can take different forms. A simple email that appears to come from the customer's bank, or a piece of computer code that arrives via a web browser or as spam or through a CD you innocently load into your computer.

By whatever means it sneaks into the computer, the malicious software invader is usually out to steal your identity and your money. Malware, as it is known in the trade, includes different types of computer code such as viruses, worms, trojan horses, spyware and crimeware.

Malware is more sophisticated than bogus messages from the wife of a now-deceased Nigerian general who has US\$10 billion and wants your help - and your bank details - to dispose of it.

Large criminal organisations, akin to the mafia with their worldwide network of operatives, are operating out of Russia and other former Soviet Union countries, as well as from China and South America. The groups use malicious software to steal from individuals or financial institutions and the annual cost to the global computer-using community runs into hundreds of billions of dollars.

In Australia, the loss to cyber crime is estimated to be as much as \$4 billion a year. Worse still, experts believe the rate of production by criminal gangs of these potentially devastating electronic intruders could now be greater than that of legitimate software applications.

At Ballarat University, Associate Professor Paul Watters describes a classical example of cyber theft

called 'phishing' and how criminals use a 'bait' to steal a person's identity - and their money. The message typically arrives as an email and appears to be genuinely from the customer's bank with a warning "Your account has been temporarily suspended".

The email explains that to regain access to the account, the customer must update the billing information by following a link and filling in the required details. The message seems official, the language bureaucratic, but there is a sense of urgency that demands immediate action.

Watters says phishing is a serious problem because it enables criminals to use social engineering to steal money. People who respond to emails pretending to be from a bank or a lottery or even the Tax Office are redirected to a fake website that looks authentic.

If they then provide their name, account details and the user password, the criminals can log into

the person's account and withdraw money. Of course, the banks respond as soon as a customer reports this and will track the fake site and ensure it is shut down; but this can take days and by that time the customer can have his or her identity stolen along with their money.

As the term implies, phishing refers to the baits used by cyber criminals to 'catch' financial information and passwords. This is part of credit card fraud which Watters says costs Australians and the financial institutions about \$100 million a year.

Watters says the innovative discoveries being made in Victoria offer a great opportunity for Australia to develop technology that could be exported and licensed to other countries. One advantage of being a smaller country than say the US, he says, is that the number of people dealing with this type of problem is also smaller so they tend to get along well and cooperate more easily than they otherwise might. ♦



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Looking forward

I trust all taxi industry participant have taken advantage of a great opportunity to provide feedback on the future direction of the industry by making a submission to the Taxi Industry Inquiry.

As I mentioned in my previous editorial, following completion of the inquiry, a Taxi Services Commission will be formed which will have responsibility for regulating taxis and hire cars. The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) will at a point in time, transition to this Commission.

Until that time, the VTD will continue to operate as normal and there are no changes to the obligations and responsibilities of taxi and hire car participants.

In particular, the VTD will focus on a number of priorities during the 2011/12 year to ensure the taxi, hire vehicle and driving instructor deliver safe, sustainable, reliable and accessible services.

Safety of drivers and passengers will continue to be high on

our agenda. This will include reinforcing the use of safety tools/initiatives such as safety cameras, driver protection screens and pre-paid fares.

We also are committed to ensuring taxi passengers have access to timely and efficient services. This includes identifying and penalising wheelchair accessible taxi drivers who chose to breach their driver accreditation conditions.

We will continue to make operators and Network Service Providers accountable through various compliance and audit initiatives. Compliance with Regulations and Business & Service Standards will continue to be scrutinised.

We want the best people in our industry. To that end we will look at ways how Accreditation and Licensing can be optimised to ensure we can remove rogue participants from the industry.

Last, but not least, we are committed to maintaining frequent and timely communication with the



PETER CORCORAN
General Manager
Victorian Taxi Directorate

industry. As a case in point, the newly established Taxi Fleet Forum, Taxi Operator Forum and Taxi Driver Forum will provide an opportunity for various industry stakeholder groups to provide feedback on issues that matter to them.

I should note that while these will guide us in the year ahead, they will not preclude the VTD from undertaking a range of other activities in line with its regulatory capacity.



Prepaid fares labels

Prepaid fares is a driver safety initiative introduced to reduce fare evasion and the associated conflict between drivers and passengers, particularly during the late night and early morning hours.

Prepaid fares labels play an important role in informing taxi passengers about the requirement to prepay their fares when travelling between 10pm and 5am.

The VTD has written to Network Service Providers, licence holders and taxi operators, formalising the requirement under regulation 23 (1) (a) & (b) of the Transport (Taxi-Cabs) Regulations 2005 for all taxis across Victoria to display two external and up to two internal prepaid labels at all times from 1 August 2011.

It will be an offence under the regulations for taxis not to display the external and internal prepaid labels from that date.

Licence holders and operators will be able to pick up an initial supply of prepaid labels from their affiliated Network Service Providers.

A limited number of labels may also be picked up from the VTD head office (Level 23, 80 Collins St, Melbourne) and the Taxi Inspection Centre at Melbourne Airport.

Licence holders and operators seeking to obtain replacement external prepaid fare labels will need to source them in the same manner as other taxi livery decals. Replacement prepaid internal labels can continue to be collected from the VTD.

Information relating to the positioning and appearance of the labels, as well as label manufacturing specifications, can be viewed on the VTD website (at www.taxi.vic.gov.au).

I would like to take this opportunity to strongly urge drivers to always ask passengers to prepay their taxi fare when travelling during the late evening and early morning hours.

Displaying prepaid fares stickers will be compulsory after 1 August 2011. ❀



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Men think drinking

will ease depression and anxiety

A random telephone survey of 300 men across Australia commissioned by beyondblue: the national depression initiative has revealed that many men still think that taking a mate to the pub, or telling him to put on a brave face, would be helpful to someone with depression.

The survey also revealed that many more men, who

may unknowingly be experiencing an anxiety disorder, are likely to drink alcohol to boost their confidence when they go out. A third of men aged 18 to 34 (33 per cent) said they'd 'drunk alcohol to help them go out', as did around a quarter of men aged 35 to 54 (23 per cent).

Around half of the men surveyed (51 per cent) said





that they or someone in their family had experienced depression and more than three-quarters (77 per cent) said that the person with depression had sought help.

beyondblue Deputy CEO Dr Nicole Highet said: "It's great news that so many men know that professional help is available, but not everyone knows what is helpful and that means many men don't get the assistance they need."

When asked about depression, just under a quarter of the respondents (22 per cent) thought it would be helpful to 'take the person to the pub to help him forget his worries'. The same number said they thought it would also be helpful to tell the person to 'put on a brave face and push on'.

"We've obviously still got more work to do on some attitudes – especially as 17 per cent of the men surveyed said they thought 'people with depression who had jobs of high responsibility should quit'. This indicates that many men still may not think depression and other mental health problems are treatable, in the same way that physical health problems like diabetes or asthma are treatable and manageable," Dr Highet said.

Research shows around a million adults in Australia live with depression and over two million have an anxiety disorder.

On average one in five women and one in eight men will experience depression in their lifetime – and one in four people will experience an anxiety disorder.

Dr Highet said: "Encouragingly, just under half the men surveyed (40 per cent) recognised that anxiety is more common than depression. When asked where

they would seek information about anxiety, half (50 per cent) said they would search the internet – and just over a quarter (27 per cent) said they would go to a doctor.

"Disappointingly, only around one fifth (19 per cent) of the respondents said they would seek professional help if they had an anxiety disorder and a slightly higher number (22 per cent) said they would talk to a family member," she said.

beyondblue Clinical Adviser, Associate Professor Michael Baigent said he is very concerned that almost one in ten men surveyed (9 per cent) said they couldn't leave the house for fear of having a panic attack and that so many reported drinking alcohol to help them go out.

"Anxiety disorders can severely disrupt people's lives, but they are very treatable and people should be aware that you don't have to put up with it. A doctor can help.

"Research shows that more than half the people with depression are likely to have a co-existing anxiety disorder. And when it comes to either trying to help yourself or your mates deal with anxiety or depression, alcohol is not the answer.

"When men use alcohol to try to avoid anxiety, it's more likely they'll become dependent on alcohol in the long-term and that the anxiety will get worse. They can also put themselves in a very dangerous situation by drinking alcohol as people with anxiety also frequently have suicidal thoughts. This fact alone emphasises how important it is to get help," he said. ♣



New NT licence plates


Taxis and other commercial passenger vehicles in the Northern Territory will not be affected by the changeover to a new alpha-number-alpha series for general issue licence plates. Standard, Substitute, Peak Period and Multi Purpose taxis will retain the existing alphanumeric and colour formats that identify their vehicle classes.

The new configuration for general issue licence plates replaces the purely numeric sequence introduced in the 1950s. Licence plates can only accommodate a finite array of numbers, and after 60 years Territory number plates have reached 999*999. The Department of Lands and Planning, which operates motor vehicle registries in the Territory, will distribute the new plates.

All Australian jurisdictions have adopted the new system, and Territory plates will now be prefaced by 'C' to distinguish them from the unique letter identifiers chosen by the ACT and the states. The move to reserve the 'C' series for the Territory began in 2008.

With 'C' consistently occupying one position on each plate, the revamp will generate 1,554,801 plate combinations. Depending on the rate of consumption, the alphanumeric series may last 30 to 50 years.

The first of the new number plates - CA*00*AA - has been installed at the Alice Springs-based National Road Transport Hall of Fame. The plates will retain ochre characters on a reflective white background, and the tag 'NT Outback Australia'. ❀



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URGENT NOTICE-TAXI CAMERA SYSTEMS

Martin Meters have supplied approximately 500 Martin Cabcam DV digital video recorders to Victorian taxis since 2002. We are most concerned about the new VTD Taxi Camera specification which in our opinion cannot be met by manufacturers of full colour high capacity digital video recorders. This means that we can no longer sell Digital Video Camera Systems or even service or re-install existing Martin CabCam DV digital video systems in Victorian Taxis unless the Minister agrees to the VTA request to instruct the VTD to place a hold on the rollout of the upgrade/extension program and refer the whole matter of safety cameras to the taxi enquiry- (ref May issue of Taxi Talk).

Martin Meters and our valued customers have always believed that High capacity digital video recording at a speed of 30 frames per second not only identifies the alleged attacker but also supplies more accurate and conclusive recorded information to assist Police prosecution. We also believe that the new VTD Taxi Camera specification encourages and approves only the use of expensive digital photo type technology that can record as slow as one photo per second. In our opinion this technology is mainly suitable for identifying the alleged attacker, without providing enough recorded information as to what actually happened during an attack to be conclusive. For example: A physical altercation initiated by a passenger assaulting the taxi driver might only capture the taxi driver responding in self defence which may in turn lead to Police incorrectly charging the wrong person or not laying any charges at all. - FRANK J HART

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