VOICE
OF THE TAXI INDUSTRY

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MAGAZINE

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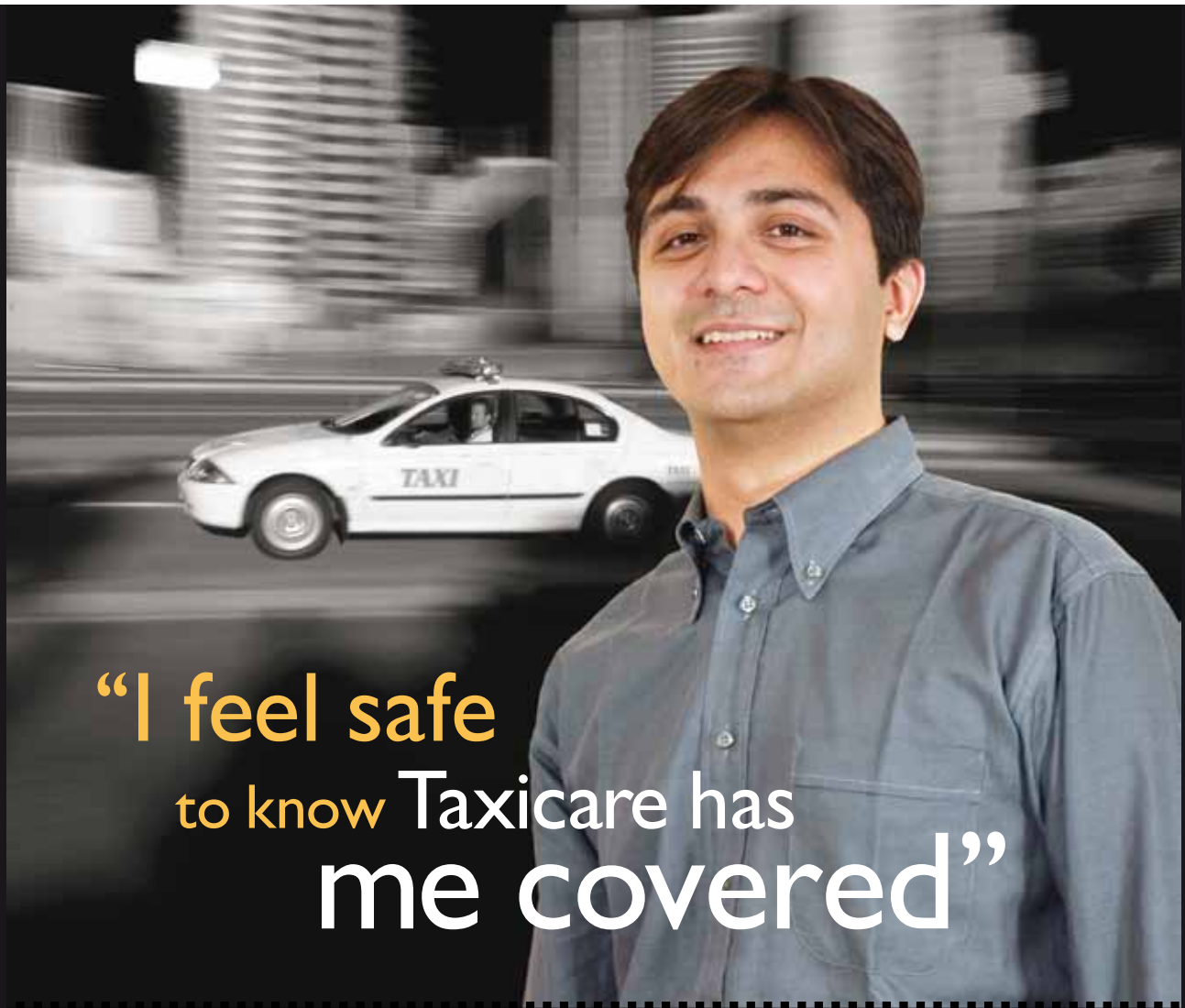

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MAGAZINE EDITOR ..... Toni F. Peters
VTA EDITOR ..... Neil Sach
FOUNDER ..... Stanley F. White
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ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES
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PRESIDENT ..... Kevin Gange
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE ..... Neil Sach

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major taxi event

Neil Sach VTA CEO

The major taxi industry event held on 7 July at the Dallas Brooks Centre saw taxi licence holders, taxi operators, taxi networks and taxi drivers come together to hear about the implications of the recommendations contained in the draft report of the Taxi Industry Inquiry. An overview of the event is contained in a separate article.

The event was a joint effort by the Victorian Taxi Association and Taxi Industy Stakeholders Association, with both associations expressing their concerns as to what is likely to happen to licence values and taxi earnings should the draft recommendations be adopted by Government.

A key message for those who attended, and those who did not, was that anyone who might be negatively impacted must make a submission to the Inquiry and let their members of Parliament know of their concerns. Telephone or call in to their electoral offices to set up a meeting.

The closing date for submissions to the Inquiry was 13 July, but it is important that lobbying of members of Parliament continues.

The Executive Summary of the VTA submission to the draft report is contained in this edition of *Taxi Talk*. The complete submission can be viewed on the VTA website www.victaxi.com.au.

It is anticipated that the Inquiry's final report should be completed and presented to the Minister for Public Transport around the end of September.

After that, the Government will decide what recommendations it will accept and not accept. The Government will also need to decide the transition arrangements between what exists now and what has to be done to incorporate the recommendations it accepts.

Despite what has been reported in the media, the VTA is not rushing off to initiate Court action. Such action can only be considered when it is precisely known what the Government intends to do. We are some months away from this.

In the meantime, the VTA has engaged expert resources to undertake further work on the economic implications of the major recommended reform changes. ✤

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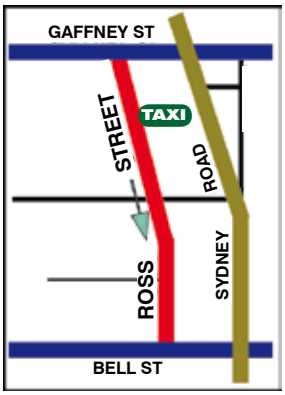

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tax time scams

scammers on the loose - here's how to spot them

The Tax Office has issued a warning about the growing number of scams being reported, attempting to trick businesses into paying more for dodgy tax services, which scammers say will provide an even bigger return.

This comes just days after the Fair Work Ombudsman warned businesses of similar types of workplace authority scammers.

Commissioner Michael D'Ascenzo said the office so far has received over 5,000 reports of phishing emails using the ATO name, and over 3,000 reports of attempting phone scams.

These fake emails use the ATO graphic, and the message identifies the sender as being part of the ATO.

D'Ascenzo says businesses need to remain vigilant.

"The ATO tends to report higher incidences of scams at this time of the year," D'Ascenzo said.

"With the end of financial year approaching and many people expecting refunds, scammers are using this opportunity to pretend to be from the ATO. It is important that the community stays vigilant as scammers are increasing their efforts to make scams appear more genuine and legitimate."

The ATO says victims have reported calls at any time of the day, and on any day of the week. The problem is that when these scammers get any piece of information – including just your name or bank details – they can commit identify fraud to lodge returns in your name.

"Anyone can be a victim of a scam," D'Ascenzo said. "If correspondence seems suspicious, too good to be true, asks you for personal details or cannot be verified through an official source, it is likely to be a scam and should be reported."

But there's some good news too. Phishing emails can be easy to spot – the formatting won't be quite right, or the email it's sent from has spelling errors.

"Be cautious of phone calls or emails suggesting you are due a refund or asking you to transfer money overseas," the ATO says.

"The ATO will never ask you to provide credit card details or copies of personal identification such as driver's license or passport in an email."

Patrick Stafford ✤

New city cab ordinance

CHICAGO: An ordinance tightening of taxi regulations came into effect on 1 July 2012 in an attempt to clean up Chicago's taxi industry.

- Cabbies will now be restricted to working 12 hours a day, excluding breaks.
- Cab companies are required to keep more detailed records regarding drivers and their schedules. Companies also will be held responsible for driving violations.

Passengers will see a few changes as well.

- A permanent $1 fee will replace a temporary fuel surcharge added to each ride.
- Drivers can now charge a $50 fee if a rider vomits in their vehicle. ✤

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Portrait of Romanos Eid in front of the first taxi he drove, c1972. Source: Romanos Eid

life behind the taxi wheel

Immigration Museum, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne

From brides' chauffeurs to drivers of the drunk and disorderly – a new display at the Immigration Museum reveals stories from Melbourne's taxi-driving migrants.

Focusing on the lives of Lebanese migrant brothers Youssef, Romanos and Tansa Eid, the new Immigrant Stories display case highlights both the entrepreneurial opportunities and the precarious unpredictability of life "on the taxi".

"During the 1970s and '80s, greater earnings could be made driving taxis compared with set wages – a difference that might amount to hundreds of dollars a week – provided drivers were willing to put in long hours," said co-curator Moya McFadzean.

In 1973, the Eid brothers established taxi businesses in the hope of prosperity, independence, mobility and flexible hours – purchasing licences for around $17,000 each, and hanging Christian icons in their taxis for protection.

"I used to go to my brothers' houses to see if they made it home, when we first started. We used to get scared, there was trouble; there were some Lebanese cab drivers that were killed before I started, maybe 35 years ago, in Ballarat. It was not safe at night," Romanos Eid recalled.

"Since the mid-1990s, the taxi industry has shifted from an owner-operated service to an investor-driven industry," said guest curator Christine Eid, Tansa's daughter and Youssef and Romanos' niece. "With the cost of licences in 2012 rising to just under $480,000, the owner-taxi business is now out of reach for new migrants. Instead, they lease licences for about $24,000 a year – working long hours with no entitlements or investment opportunities."

The new Behind the Wheel display case will be displayed at the Immigration Museum from 27 July as a long-term element of Immigrant Stories, showing for five years. ✤

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target taxi thugs

Call for taxi drivers to join list of protected workers

Melbourne's taxi tzar has called for new laws aimed at the thugs who target cabbies.

Penalties for assaults on drivers also should be significantly increased to be a deterrent to anti-social behaviour, according to taxi inquiry supremo, Professor Allan Fels.

The State Government has backed taking a tougher line against the hoodlums.

"Any measure that seeks to improve the safety of cabbies is worth considering," Transport Minister Terry Mulder said.

The Government said it could not rule out adding taxi drivers to a list of "protected species" that included paramedics, police and other emergency service workers.

The possibility of there being a specific offence for attacking a taxi driver is definitely being considered.

The proposed change would automatically add a year to the sentence of violent aggressors convicted of targeting cabbies.

Prof Fels said he had spoken with Victoria Police about the need to increase driver safety, and planned to raise with Chief Commissioner Ken Lay the idea of a specific offence.

"The possibility of there being a specific offence for attacking a taxi driver is definitely being considered," Prof Fels said.

The news follows a spate of attacks on cabbies, including a recent rampage by youths who attacked taxis with baseball bats in Melbourne's western suburbs.

"No one excuses yobbish, drunken behaviour, but the problem is worsened when people have to wait too long for taxis," Prof Fels said.

Victorian Taxi Association spokesman David Samuel supported the push for tougher penalties.

"This is not a regular assault - it's against someone in their workplace," he said.

Mr Samuel said attacks were becoming increasingly violent.

"It's not just the frequency, but the level of violence," he said.

Mr Samuel said more community work was needed, aimed at building respect for drivers.

"We would like to see more work done to find out why this (attacks on drivers) is actually happening," Mr Samuel said.

by: Greg Thom

Herald Sun July 18, 2012 ✤

One of the taxis damaged in the attacks on June 18 2012. Picture Darren Tindale

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Uber summons cars

Uber is a mobile phone app that can summons a car

Uber, a start-up based in San Francisco, has won a following among urbanites with its novel twist on calling a car service: its app lets you summon a luxury sedan with a tap on your phone. Now it is trying to appeal to the less affluent by adding less luxurious cars.

In San Francisco and New York on 4 July 2012 Uber started to give customers the option of choosing a hybrid car at a price that it says will be 10 to 25 percent more than a taxi. That compares with the 40 to 100 percent premium that customers pay for a black town car.

"This is the first big step Uber is taking to go to the masses," said Travis Kalanick, the company's chief executive.

Uber, which has raised $43 million from investors since 2011, is one of several start-ups, including Cabulous and Taxi Magic, that are trying to profit by connecting drivers and passengers more efficiently.

Its software tries to predict areas where rides are likely to be in high demand at different times of day. This information appears on a driver's smartphone so that he can know where to linger and, ideally, pick up customers within minutes of a request for a ride. Uber does not itself provide the cars; it works up with existing for-hire car services that piggyback on its technology and give it a cut of fares.

Of course, Uber's convenience comes with a cost. People are paying not just for the service, but also the gas used by the big sedans. That's where hybrid vehicles will help bring down the price: drivers will spend less time and money fueling up.

In San Francisco, for example, the hybrid cars will cost $5 for the base fee, and then $3.25 a mile after that. By contrast, the town cars cost $8 for the base fee and then $4.95 a mile. Taxis in San Francisco cost $3.16 a mile including a tip of 15 percent.

Despite its higher fares, Uber has grown significantly. The company declined to disclose precise numbers, but Mr. Kalanick of Uber, said it had recorded 20 to 30 percent revenue growth from month to month over the last year, and that there were thousands of cars using Uber's technology. In San Francisco, 400 drivers are signed up with Uber, and that number is growing all the time, Mr. Munro said.

In Boston, Uber is shaking things up in other ways. Starting 4 July customers there will have the option to request stretch limos.

Brian X. Chen

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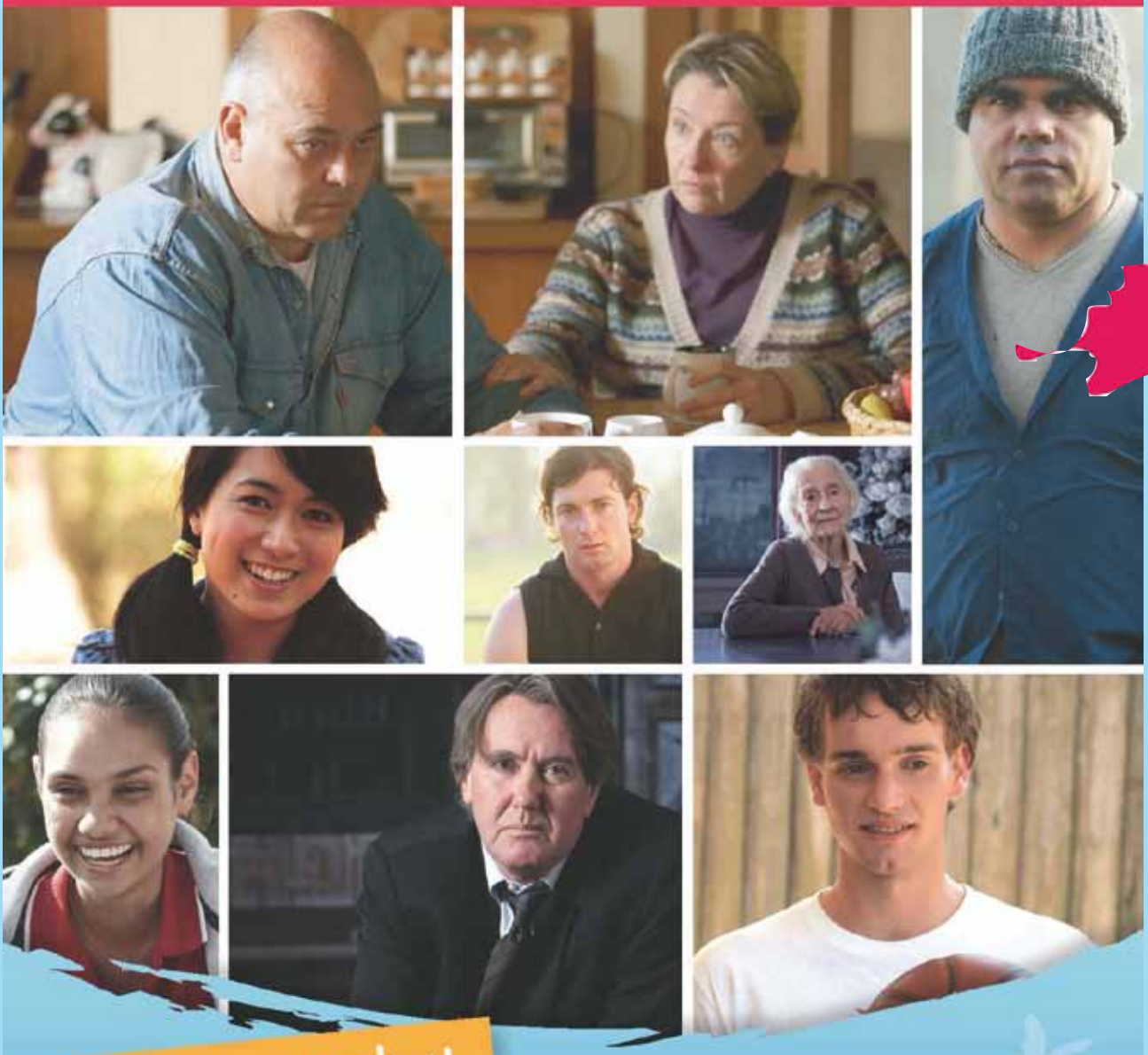

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www.beyondblue.org.au

Diabetes doubles the risk of depression

beyondblue free DVD now available

It is important for people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes to understand the relationship between depression and their condition.

For people with diabetes, the risk of depression is more that of the rest of the community. Conversely, having depression can double the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, due to elevated stress hormones and weight gain.

CEO of beyondblue Ms Kate Carnell AO said managing these conditions places many demands and pressures on people with the illness and their carers - and can leave people feeling particularly anxious.

"It can be tough managing treatments and symptoms, and this can get people down… and we know that ongoing stress and worry can lead to people developing depression and anxiety disorders," she said.

To help people with diabetes and their carers, beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative, in association with Diabetes Australia (Vic) has produced a FREE DVD and fact sheet to raise awareness of just how common it is for people with diabetes also to have depression and/or anxiety – and to provide advice on how to take control.

"We know that depression and anxiety in people with diabetes often goes undetected and therefore remains untreated. Treating the diabetes won't alleviate the depression or anxiety, but treating the depression and anxiety can help people to manage their diabetes better," Ms Carnell said.

The DVD, Taking Control: Diabetes, Depression & Anxiety, features interviews with people who have type 1 or type 2 diabetes and depression and/or an anxiety disorder; a carer; and health professionals including a psychologist and an endocrinologist.

They talk about how to manage both diabetes and depression/anxiety and have tips for taking control of these conditions.

"If people with diabetes have no interest in their usual activities and are getting little enjoyment out of life, they should talk to their doctor or diabetes educator about the possibility of depression and anxiety," Ms Carnell said.

Maggie, 47, was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and she says it makes the depression more difficult.

"Because of having the diabetes, you don't feel like exercising. You feel shocking. You feel like everything is lead, when it's uncontrolled. You don't have any energy, you're really tired, all those sorts of things. And yet you know if you could just motivate yourself to get outside, go for a walk, then you'd be helping the depression and you'd be helping the diabetes," Maggie said.

Ms Carnell emphasised it's important that carers of people with diabetes look after themselves too, as they are also at increased risk of developing mental health problems.

"Caring for a person with a chronic illness and a mental health problem can take its toll and it's important that carers understand the caring role can put them at increased risk of developing health problems themselves, including depression and anxiety. Don't feel your problems aren't important. If things are getting you down, talk to your doctor," she said.

To order the FREE DVD, fact sheet on diabetes and depression, or information to support carers, go to www.beyondblue.org.au or call the beyondblue info line 1300 22 4636. ✤

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Major Taxi Industry Event

Saturday 7 July saw a crowd of over 1,400 taxi industry participants gather at Dallas Brooks Centre in East Melbourne.

A joint effort between the Victorian Taxi Association and Taxi Industry Stakeholders Victoria, the day was an opportunity for the industry to come together to discuss the key issues in the Taxi Industry Inquiry's draft report.

VTA vice president Stephen Armstrong (president Kevin Gange being in hospital) and TISV president John Vlassopoulos set the scene on the key issues around the potential destruction of licence values and the less than adequate revenue flowing into the industry.

These presentations were followed by presentations from Professor Harry Clarke, a transport economist who discussed the impact of open entry on licence value, and Ross Walker, an economic consultant who spoke about the potential economic implications for licence holders and operators.

Tim Reddish, Executive Director at the New Zealand Taxi Federation, informed the meeting of the impact on service delivery and fares when New Zealand industry went to open entry in the 1990s.

Neil Sach on behalf of the Australian Taxi Industry Association, advised that ATIA was ready to support the VTA with financial and specialist assistance.

The day finished with a series of questions on notice from the audience, that were answered by the expert panel, including David Samuel of the VTA.

The response from the event was overwhelmingly positive.

Clearly, this is a worrying time for those involved in the Victorian taxi industry.

The inquiry spent 14 months on their draft report but only allowed six weeks for responses to it.

The value of the event was clear - assisting people to understand in more detail many aspects of the report and how the recommendations will impact their businesses and families. They were then able to be more confident when responding to the inquiry, secure in the knowledge that their understanding of the main issues was clear. ✤

VTA Vice President's address

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in organising today. I'd like to acknowledge fellow members of the VTA Executive and our colleagues from Taxi Industry Stakeholders Victoria. Most importantly I would like to acknowledge you - drivers, owners, operators, everyone from our great industry - who have made the time to be with us this afternoon.

I am here representing VTA President Kevin Gange, who unfortunately is not well and is in hospital. Our best wishes go to Kevin, to Kevin Junior and the Gange Family.

When I look out on this hall at the many, many hundreds of you who are here, concerned about your businesses and your futures and the impact that this Inquiry will have on you I am reminded of another meeting held in this place 26 years ago. It was the same place, a different time, but we were here to discuss something very similar - the impact of the Foletta Report and its recommendations for the future of Victoria's taxi industry. 26 years ago the industry stood against the unrestricted supply of taxi licences, and we are here today to do the same.

I want to assure you that there is a lot being done to ensure that the industry's response to the draft recommendations is a thorough one. The VTA has employed and retained legal advice, economic and financial advice and a strong government relations team to ensure that a simple message is conveyed.

That message is that a number of the recommendations contained in the draft report will destroy Victorian taxi businesses. Importantly they will lead to a decline in service standards, and increase the cost born by our passengers.

The recommendations the VTA are particularly concerned about relate to the unrestricted release of licences for $20,000, the introduction of unsafe mini cabs or Pre Booking Onlys (PBOs), a new licence zoning scheme and the requirement that operators pay the driver 60 per cent of a fare box that has not been adjusted since 2008.

Let me state emphatically that the VTA will not accept the deregulation of entry to our industry. This applies in both Melbourne and areas outside of Melbourne. The reason for this is not simply self-interest, as many outside the industry will suggest. We are proud to protect the businesses of hard working taxi people and their hard earned superannuation. But importantly, we know from studying other jurisdictions that this approach to reform does not provide a good outcome for taxi users. In many cases taxi businesses are sent to the wall and customers do not benefit. It is a lose-lose scenario.

Stephen Armstrong
VTA Vice President

The process going forward will be a difficult one. The road ahead is long. We at the VTA urge you all to remain involved and not assume others will do the work for you. It is vital that everyone here puts in a submission addressing the draft recommendations and speaks with Members of Parliament. Ultimately it will be the politicians who make the decisions and we must ensure they have both sides of the story and our Industry is well understood and well represented. A strong and sustainable Industry means better outcomes for passengers also.

We realise the current system isn't perfect and are happy to embrace change and reform - we just do not believe it needs to come at the expense of thousands of small businesses.

I urge you all to look at the Pillars document that the VTA prepared and is available from our website. It contains what we believe to be a sensible set of reforms. The VTA will also be urging the inquiry to re-consider their approach to industry and engage with it in a meaningful way. We don't accept social media and a 6 week submission timeframes to demonstrate good faith. When I say industry I am not just talking about the VTA. they should also be talking with people like you - the people on the ground.

Many continue to ask about legal options and what happens next. We are getting preliminary legal advice - we will be prepared - but I want to make it very clear to all of you here today that our strategy to dealing with this must be to ensure that the government eventually accepts a sensible set of reforms. We must focus on talking with government and ensuring they understand what is at stake here and how we can better service customers. We must not see this as a foregone conclusion. It simply isn't.

Once again let me urge you to get involved and stay involved. There is no room for complacency. Remain positive and remember to demonstrate to the inquiry and the politicians that with the right reforms we can provide a better taxi service for Victoria. ✤

new direction

Executive Summary of VTA submission

THE Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) is pleased to provide this response to the Victorian Taxi Industry Inquiry's (VTII) draft report, Customers First: Service Safety, Choice.

At the outset the VTA would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to meaningful and sensible reform of the Victorian taxi industry - based on improving service delivery outcomes for taxi customers. The VTA has presented the VTII with what it considers the key pillars of reform required to improve service to customers. The pillars can be viewed at www.victaxi.com.au.

The VTA has provided the VTII with numerous submissions outlining its views on specific matters and ideas for improving the industry and the service it provides. The VTA's members and their affiliates, at their own expense, have contributed to the VTII's work and provided the underpinning data that has been relied upon by the VTII. On this basis, it would appear reports by the VTII that the industry did not comply with data and information requests have been exaggerated.

The VTA acknowledge that a large number of the VTII's recommendations are sensible. However, there are a number that will be commented on here that the VTA believe will lead to poor outcomes for both taxi users and the industry. The VTA do not accept that increasing competition across all market sectors will always produce a more desirable outcome for consumers in the taxi market.

Ultimately, effective reforms must relate directly to the problems they are attempting to address. Customers have very little interest in the structure behind a taxi service. They want

Kevin Gange
VTA President

a clean taxi that takes them safely where they want to go at an appropriate price.

As has been demonstrated in many jurisdictions where open entry licensing models have been adopted, the result is oversupply rather than the emergence of productive competition. In these jurisdictions this has led to lower service standards and higher costs being borne by the consumer. A sharp decline in the productive efficiency of these taxi industries also emerged.

There is no evidence to suggest that unrestricted entry would address the issues affecting Victoria's taxi industry. This is because increased supply will not address the things that are currently not working well.

The issues in Victoria relate to the level of service, not availability, of taxis. In Melbourne, one of the most common complaints, according to the Victorian Taxi Directorate is fare refusal. The VTA questions the ability of increased supply of taxis to address this kind of service delivery issue.

A legitimate concern of the VTA is that unrestricted entry to the industry, when the market is already full will promote a decline in the standard of the service. The regulator will be unable to keep up with the rise in the number of commercial passenger vehicles in operation.

Increasing supply through deregulation of licences would amplify the existing problems with Victoria's taxi service. The only justification for increase in supply should be when demand is not being met across an entire shift (as opposed to only short periods at peak times). With occupancy rates in Melbourne's taxis of between 25 and 30 per cent per shift this is an unsustainable argument.

The VTA is of the view that the VTII recommendations and the processes suggested are out-dated and do not address what appears to be the central problem: service standards, not supply. In the past a sustainable argument for deregulation of licensing could be developed because there wasn't reliable data available to regulators to ensure they could effectively measure demand and release licences in line with that demand when required. This is no longer the case.

This data is now readily available through Primary Network Service Providers (PNSP) and is being used in many Australian jurisdictions to inform sensible decisions regarding supplying the market with additional taxis on an annual basis. The VTA supports this approach to supply because it ensures customer demand is met and the industry remains sustainable. The VTA has also argued a similar process of evidence based decision making should be adopted for fare setting.

Other areas of concern to the VTA include changes to the structure of the commercial relationship between operators and drivers; the lack of attention given to improving driver safety; the introduction of new licence zones based on licence values; the introduction of mini cabs; and the removal of mandatory affiliation to PNSPs.

The VTA finds issue with the lack of a clear and central point of contact for customers with concerns. This should be the role of the PNSP, not split between a government regulator and the industry. Combined with mandatory affiliation this is the best way to ensure an appropriate and effective mechanism to guarantee a higher level of service standards.

VTA does not have the resources or the time to respond to each and every recommendation in the six week period to the 13 July 2012.

As VTII are aware, the VTA requested the timeframe for submission be extended from six to 12 weeks to give industry participants and community sufficient time to respond to the complex draft report. According to a letter received by the VTA on 27 June 2012, signed by a VTII officer, this request was denied on the grounds that there had been significant consultation in the period leading up to the release of the draft report. The VTA do not accept the reasoning behind this view and see the six week time frame as completely inadequate within which to respond to a document of this length and complexity.

The VTA will continue to undertake and provide detailed analysis of the draft report and its potential implications for taxi users and the taxi industry. The VTA has engaged the services of leading accountancy firm PWC to provide detailed economic modelling and advice. This information will be provided to the VTII and will be made available on the VTA website. To obtain significant, in depth economic and financial analysis in the six week timeframe provided was not possible.

Finally, the VTA encourages the VTII to take a more open and consensus based approach in developing its final recommendations. The VTII have developed its ideas and presented them to the community and the industry. There is now an opportunity for industry, the community and VTII to work together to refine the recommendations and ensure a workable set of final recommendations are developed, which deliver a high quality taxi industry for Victoria into the future.

The VTA has previously stated that the taxi industry is seeking reform that will ensure fair outcomes for the industry while providing Victorians with the taxi service they deserve. The VTA remains of the view that meaningful reform can be achieved without damaging the lives and businesses of those who have invested in the industry.

The full submission is available on the VTA website www.victaxi.com.au. ✤

mailbag

The draft is re

It was only less than 12 days ago that I felt like giving up on the fight against Professor Fels' recommendations to deregulate the taxi industry.

I was not going to respond to the draft report with a submission and did not intend to write further articles in *Taxi Talk*. So what changed my mind?

Three related but distinct incidents occurred in these last few days that changed my mind! Number one was a woman called Shirley; number two was the meeting at Dallas Brooks Hall and number three was the article written in the Herald Sun by Mr. Jeff Kennett.

Shirley is a country taxi operator. She and her husband run several taxis in a small town. They bought the taxi business more than 30 years ago and worked all their life by giving service to the people of their town. They were radio operators, dispatchers, taxi drivers, taxi licence holders and taxi operators, all in one.

Just recently they decided to retire and enjoy a well earned rest. They put their taxi business on the market found a buyer, prepared contracts of sale and looked forward to retirement.

Then Professor Fels' draft report is published and the buyer of the business withdraws immediately from the purchase. The response of the inquiry was: "I feel sorry for you".

The meeting at Dallas Brooks Hall was well attended and had some excellent speakers who had good knowledge of the subject matter and presented their arguments well. Nevertheless this was not what made an impression on me.

It was the sea of grey hair that made me realise that here are the men, who came to this wonderful country from Europe in the fifties and sixties with nothing but a few belongings.

They became taxi drivers and then taxi licence holders by working extremely hard and living frugally all their lives.

Now that they are in retirement their means of a dignified life is under threat by proposed recommendations that were tried before and failed, in many places around the world.

Reading Jeff Kennett's article in the Herald Sun made me realise that I should not give up. Contrary to Professor Fels he has run the largest business in the state of Victoria and was instrumental to making the Victorian Taxi Industry the best and cheapest in Australia, if not in the world.

Professor Fels on the other hand lives in his own academic world and has never taken the risk of running his own business. It is not Mr. Kennett who should reconsider his position but Professor Fels.

Professor Fels completely ignores the fact that it was the previous Victorian Government that started the major decline in the industry through its policies of using the taxi industry as a source of revenue.

- He makes no references to the fact that the Victorian Government is now the largest single licence holder that does not drive, but assigns taxis to a third party.
- He makes no reference to the fact that the government did not work a lifetime in the taxi industry, nor paid the equivalent of a house for the licence.
- He completely ignores the fact that the fare structure model included only since 2008 a component for the lease of a licence and that this model was and is completely inadequate.
- He completely ignores the fact that the leasing of taxi licences by the government is in contradiction to competition policy by ignoring competitive neutrality.
- He seems to be preoccupied with the destruction of Cabcharge and its businesses and the destruction of the licence value, and does not seem to care what damage he causes to the very people he is supposed to protect; the public.

Let's look at three recurring concerns that Professor Fels blames for the bad state of the Victorian taxi industry.

leased, what now?

1. **High demand not serviced**
2. **High lease fees**
3. **High licence value**

1. **Solution by Professor Fels:**
   More taxis.

   Industry solution:
   Run public transport after midnight. Taxis are not mass transport.

2. **Solution by Professor Fels:**
   More leases by government at a lower price.

   Industry solution:
   Phase leasing of licences out, and make owners of the licence responsible for running the business.

3. **Solution by Professor Fels:**
   More leases by government at a lower price.

   Industry solution:
   Establish a fare structure that excludes any component for the lease of the licence and let market forces establish the price of a taxi licence.

Introducing more taxis into the market and thereby magically getting more customers and increasing the occupancy rate of taxis, defies all logic and belongs into the realm of fiction and make-belief.

More taxis should only be introduced once certain trigger criteria, like occupancy rates and response times have been reached.

It is also very hard to understand that leasing licences is a good thing when it is done by the Government and it becomes evil when private enterprise does it.

Professor Fels has made it very clear how he intends to ruin the lives of many people who have worked a lifetime in the industry.

He will not give up on his economic theory.

He wants to blame Cabcharge and taxi networks for the opposition to his recommendations, we have to show him that it is the whole taxi industry that opposes him and will fight against his theories.

Hans Althoff
Owner/Operator

Supporting Victoria's taxis

ATIA
Australian Taxi Industry Association

John Bowe, president of the Australian Taxi Industry Association (ATIA) was to be a speaker at the major taxi event on 7 July.

Unfortunately, John became unwell which prevented him from attending. However, John authorised me as a Vice President to speak on behalf of the ATIA.

Over recent times all States and Territories have undergone taxi reviews in one form or another. All such reviews have led governments and taxi industries to take stock of the performance and regulatory framework of their industry, and take co-operative corrective actions.

However, this current review in Victoria is by far the most wide ranging and potentially damaging so far. It not only has the potential to destroy the Victorian taxi industry, but has the potential to destroy taxi industries across Australia.

The ATIA stands behind the VTA and will support the VTA in any way it reasonably can, including expert and financial support.

The offer of support from the ATIA is yet another example of how the taxi industry comes together when things are tough and threatening. It makes me proud to be part of this great industry.

Neil Sach
VTA CEO & ATIA Vice President

Victoria's taxi industry is important as it offers flexibility to passengers.

As readers will be aware, I have a passionate interest in the value of Victoria's taxi industry. It is an important part of our transport mix and has a flexibility that trains, trams and buses simply do not.

The industry provides about 35 million taxi trips a year, equating to about six or seven trips per citizen.

Without an efficient taxi service we would be in deep trouble. Just to be clear, I have never had, and do not have, any financial interest in a taxi licence.

A year ago the Baillieu Government established an inquiry into the taxi industry, headed by Professor Allan Fels. The draft report has been released and Friday, [13 July 2012] is the closing date for submissions.

Many of the findings are based on common sense, such as a reduction in compliance costs, better education and training for drivers, better financial returns for drivers, and encouraging taxi licensees to purchase the vehicle of their choice.

But there are some issues that I think are inequitable, unfair, biased and will not produce the desired outcomes.

First, the findings emphasise that the "customer comes first". That is fine as a principle, and it is how any business must work if it wants to survive and grow. But the business must be profitable for the owners and the employees. No one is ever going to run a loss-making business.

Therefore, there has to be a partnership between the taxi service provider and the customer if the industry is to be viable.

Second, the inquiry's recommendations substantially favour the hire car industry over the taxi industry, even though there are many more taxis operating in Victoria than hire cars. It has been suggested that individuals can purchase a hire car licence for life for $40,000 or a five-year taxi licence for $100,000.

The training requirements for hire car owners are much less rigorous than those required for taxi drivers and licence holders.

Third, there are 5258 taxi licences in Victoria, of which about 3500 licences or "plates" have been purchased by individuals, families, trusts and corporations. Another 1758 have been issued for use by the Victorian Government.

For many individuals, these licence investments were to be their superannuation nest egg. If the Government adopts these recommendations as written, it is akin to government introducing a regulation that reduces the value of your home.

Fourth, the inquiry recommends the leasing of many new licences at varying prices from $2000 to $20,000 a year. Currently, taxis are occupied for only about 30 per cent of the time they are on the road.

Jeff Kennett
former Liberal Premier of Victoria

The inquiry argues if you make more taxis available, demand for their services will increase. I don't accept this argument and I doubt many drivers do either.

More taxis and more competition, means less business and revenue per cab.

The report is silent on any fare increase, believing all changes and desired outcomes can be secured by increasing demand. Rubbish.

One of the greatest criticisms of the taxi industry is that taxis are not around when you most need them - late at night in the inner city. True, but the recommendations of the inquiry will only make matters worse.

The majority of taxis that work around the clock, including in the city, are taxis owned by the fleet operators and corporations. Most owner/operators do not.

The proposal to make available more leased licences will ensure that very few of the new licences will go into areas that are already challenged for many obvious reasons.

Finally, the inquiry recommends doing away with a uniform colour for taxis, allowing owners to select the colour of their choice.

That's fine, but if the customer is the focus of the inquiry's findings, why make it harder for customers, not to mention visitors to the state, to recognise a taxi on the street? Victoria once had the best taxi industry in the country, and we can have it again, with everyone working together.

From: Herald Sun July 11, 2012 ✤

Time to deregulate the taxi industry, says Allan Fels

In his time, former premier Jeff Kennett made some great reforms to the taxi industry that my report builds on. As Mr Kennett has said in the Herald Sun, the industry needs to be fixed.

However, he casts doubt on the title of the report, Customers First. The justification is that it signals the need for a refocus of the industry's culture and regulation from one of "taxi owners first, customers last".

Moreover, contrary to his suggestion, the report acknowledges it is in the interest of customers that the industry is profitable and efficient.

Mr Kennett makes the point most of the report's 145 recommendations are common sense, but does not stop to consider why these measures have not been adopted. The reason is system failure by the industry and by the system of regulation, which is why a total overhaul is needed.

Strangely, Mr Kennett criticises the recommendations to moderately boost the supply of hire cars by reducing the licence fee from $60,000 to $40,000, on the grounds there are less rigorous training requirements for hire car drivers. Everyone knows hire car driver standards are already high and very well self-regulated. Why impose unnecessary regulation?

Next, he raises a more pertinent issue. He says that: "For many individuals, licence investments were to be their superannuation nest egg. If the Government adopts these recommendations as written, it is akin to government introducing a regulation that reduces the value of your home."

This approach to policy - that nothing should be done to improve taxi services if it has a negative effect on licence values - has been the key to the failure of successive governments to regulate for a good industry that provides excellent service.

Interestingly, governments have never hesitated to make regulations that increase the value of taxi licences at the expense of customers.

Moreover, powerful interests, such as the taxi networks and Cabcharge, are opposing reform, and hiding behind the issue of their so-called concern for the fate of licence holders. The fact is licence values have risen 16 per cent a year for many, many years. Most licence holders don't drive but assign taxis to a third party.

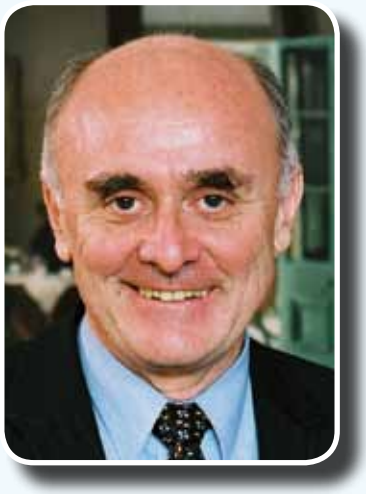
Our recommendations strike a middle path. There could be total deregulation under which licences could be obtained for free by qualified people.

This would put the industry on the same footing as other industries but would reduce licence values to zero. Our approach gives current licence holders reasonable annual income. If someone owns a licence and assigns that licence, they would still earn $20,000 a year.

In addition, the declining demand for taxis is a key cause of current over-capacity, and another signal the industry is reaching crisis point. It needs full-scale enduring reform that will restore trust and confidence, boost demand and bring customers back.

Mr Kennett believes fares will go up as a result of the reforms. This betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the recommendations. The inquiry's proposal that new licences be available for $20,000 a year will cause a big reduction in existing costs and enable drivers to be paid more without forcing up taxi fares. He has previously in the Herald Sun advocated a rise in driver pay. This can be achieved only by reducing the assignment (or lease) costs that operators pay licence holders.

Mr Kennett appears to accept the dubious network claim that the supply of taxis in peak times won't increase due to the reforms. New entrants to the industry, whether taxis or hire cars, will be attracted to working on Friday and Saturday nights, especially with the more lucrative fares proposed for from 10pm to 5am (offset by cheaper fares at other times of the week).



Prof Allan Fels
Chairman of the Taxi Industry Inquiry

Finally, in our 550-page report the inquiry has asked whether all taxis need to be yellow. This issue is, if I may be pardoned the expression, a "yellow herring". There is a case for the removal of the requirement in country areas where drivers tell us yellow branding is not needed and costly. In the city areas there are pros and cons.

Yellow is recognisable. On the other hand, a more flexible approach could strengthen competition by new (and old) networks seeking clear branding - but it's a herring, whether red or yellow, because it's a point raised only for discussion, not a recommendation, and probably best left for well into the future.

Mr Kennett has previously recommended important reforms. The inquiry has adopted them all and gone even further.

I sincerely hope Mr Kennett, a great taxi industry reformer, will reconsider his position.

From: Herald Sun July 14, 2012 ✤

APAC drive on-ramp

Traffic congestion around Melbourne Airport is expected to ease with the opening of APAC Drive On-ramp, an additional entry to the Tullamarine Freeway from the southern end of the airport.

The new $26 million APAC Drive on-ramp was officially opened on Wednesday 18 July 2012.

An extension of APAC Drive, the on-ramp will improve access to the Tullamarine Freeway from the southern end of Melbourne Airport and reduce congestion throughout the airport's road network.

At 1.5 kilometers long, the dual lane elevated road passes over the long term car park and Tullamarine Freeway lanes. It then merges with city bound lanes of the freeway.

Traffic from the southern end of the terminal will no longer need to use Melrose Drive to get back into the city, reducing congestion on roads such as Centre Road, Terminal Drive, Melbourne Drive and Melrose Drive.

Taxis using the rank outside Terminal 4 (Tiger Airways) can continue south along Service Road, turn left at Grants Road and continue along Melrose Drive and veer left onto the APAC Drive On-ramp and merge with city bound lanes of the Tullamarine Freeway.

Melbourne Airport thanks the taxi drivers for their patience during the construction of APAC Drive, particularly at times when freeway closures impacted traffic flows.

For more information about current projects at Melbourne Airport, visit the Melbourne Airport website www.melbourneairport.com.au

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TAXI no trading transfers

Number of Taxi Licences July 1, 2012

METROPOLITAN (including 506 WAT vehicles)	**4,334**
COUNTRY (including 113 WAT vehicles)	**521**
OUTER SUBURBAN (including 34 WAT vehicles)	**161**
URBAN (Ballarat - Bendigo - Geelong) (including 35 WAT vehicles)	**237**
TOTAL (including 688 WAT vehicles)	**5,253**

NUMBER OF DRIVERS

Active drivers	16,000 APPROX
Accredited drivers	24,000 APPROX

ASSIGNMENTS

metro taxis	82

LICENCE TRANSFERS

metro taxis	6
urban	0
country taxis	0
hire car licences	4
special licences	2

LICENCES ISSUED

taxi licences	0
hire car licences	1
special vehicles	4
RH vehicles	1

LICENCES TRADED BY ASSIGNMENT = 919

(June 2011 - June 2012)

Compliance outcomes (1-30 June 2012)

Taxi Inspections	2381
Rectification Notices	481
Infringement Notices	112
Notices of Unroadworthiness	23
Official Warnings	36

Number of Victorian Hire Vehicle Licences June 2012

Metropolitan Hire Cars	906
Country Hire Cars	65
Special Purpose Vehicles	845
Restricted Hire Cars	628
TOTAL	**2,444**

$54,450

avg metro licence transfer value

new protection screens

there were 371 attacks on cab drivers last year

The safety of up to 3,000 taxi drivers has received a massive boost with the approval of new driver protection screens for cabs with side-curtain air bags, Minister for Public Transport and Roads Terry Mulder has announced.

In the wake of the series of horrendous attacks against taxi drivers in Melbourne's west, Mr Mulder said the new screens were a big win for driver safety.

"These new screens give cabbies the protection they need to feel safer at work," Mr Mulder said.

"There were around 1,000 taxis out there with side curtain airbags that, up until now, had no compatible driver protection screen.

"The approval of the new screen means up to 3,000 drivers who previously didn't have access to a protection screen now do, and that's a good thing.

"In light of ongoing driver-safety issues, such as the horrific events of a few weeks ago, this is a big win for driver safety."

Where an approved model exists, it has been mandatory for drivers to have access to a protection screen since 2008. Until now, no screen for an FG Falcon with side-curtain airbags has existed.

The approval of the new screen, Martin Bodyguard II MBGFG-CA, by the Victorian Taxi Directorate means there is now an approved driver protection screen for every Falcon on the road.

"We want drivers to feel safe when they are at work so people have access to reliable and convenient taxi services, particularly late at night," Mr Mulder said.

Operators of Ford Falcon FG taxis with side curtain airbags are required to make these screens available for their drivers by 4 August 2012.

In the Metropolitan, Outer Suburban or Urban taxi zones, the requirement to provide drivers access to protection screens applies only where the driver intends to operate between 10:00pm and 5:00am. In country areas, operators must provide their drivers access to a screen regardless of when the driver intends to operate.

Martin Meters, the supplier of the approved screens, can be contacted on 03 9335 1551.

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INDUSTRY INQUIRY REPORT VTD

the Victorian Taxi Directorate eagerly awaits the final TII report

VTD GM - Marnie Williams

At the time of writing, public feedback in response to the Taxi Industry Inquiry's draft report was about to close.

I would like to congratulate everyone for their contribution to the Inquiry process. I recognise it hasn't been easy but I have been impressed with the way industry participants have supported the TII process and made your views clear to the Inquiry

It is likely that, when this article is published, the TII's final report won't yet have been released. Like you, the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) eagerly awaits the final report, and of course the Government's response.

Having been through major changes in previous organisations, I know how important is to prepare for change. At the VTD we've already started looking at how the draft recommendations, if adopted, would change our operations. We're also already well into the planning process for our transition to a new statutory authority.

In a time where the only certainty is uncertainty, the VTD looks forward to working with the industry to implement the recommendations adopted by Government and build a better taxi industry. ✤

Moratorium on country taxi safety cameras

In line with recommendation 7.3 of the Taxi Industry Inquiry's draft report, an immediate moratorium has been placed on the roll-out of taxi safety cameras in country areas, while a cost-benefit assessment is undertaken.

The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) has written to all country operators informing them of the moratorium on the requirement that newly licensed and registered taxis in country areas with 10 or more taxis be fitted with security cameras (the requirement has never applied to areas with less than 10 taxis). However, operators may still fit cameras if they wish.

Camera systems that have already been installed in taxis in country areas will remain operational and fully supported by the VTD's camera download unit and Victoria Police.

The moratorium does not apply in Metropolitan, Outer Suburban and Urban taxi zones. Timelines for the installation of camera systems compliant with the 2009 Taxi Safety Camera Specifications still apply in these areas.

For more information visit taxi.vic.gov.au or call the VTD on 1800 638 802. ✤

Non-Metro photo ID rollout update

Photo identification in non-metropolitan areas is being rolled out in stages and may already be a requirement in your area.

All drivers, operators and network service providers (NSPs) in country areas should have received a letter from the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) regarding the rollout of photo identification in their area.

Operators who have not yet installed driver photo card stands in their taxis are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Stands are available from your local NSP or, for additional stands, contact the VTD on 1800 638 802.

By 3 September 2012, photo identification will be a requirement in all taxis across Victoria. ✤

enforcement update

Driver work health check results

As part of the Victorian Taxi Directorate's (VTD's) commitment to driver health and wellbeing, the VTD partnered with WorkSafe Victoria to offer taxi drivers WorkHealth checks during the rollout of photo identification in Geelong, Dandenong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

More than 370 drivers took advantage of the free check ups, learning more about the particular health risks associated with sedentary professions like taxi driving.

The checks found that drivers in urban and outer suburban areas generally didn't eat enough vegetables, exercise enough and many were at risk of developing cardiovascular disease – stroke or heart disease for example – and type 2 diabetes.

The VTD hopes that providing access to the WorkHealth checks will prompt drivers to become more conscious of their health and eat better, exercise more and generally look after themselves.

More information on WorkSafe's WorkHealth checks and keeping healthy at work is available at workhealth.vic.gov.au.

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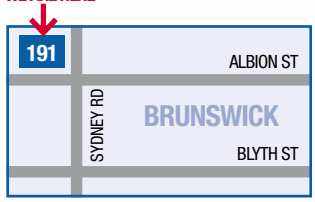

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vtd customer service

New centre at Level 23, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne

If you are visiting the VTD Customer Service Centre (CSC), here are a few tips to make your visit easier:

- Get there early: the best time to visit the VTD is first thing in the morning because the wait times are the shortest. The CSC opens at 8:30am every weekday except Wednesday (when it opens at 9:30am) and the peak period starts about 11:00am.
- Try to avoid the peak: The busiest time at the VTD customer service centre is between 11am and 3pm. This is when wait times are longest, so if you don't want to wait a long time to be served, try to come before or after the peak period if possible.
- Don't leave it too late: the VTD CSC closes at 4:30pm sharp so make sure you are there well before then. If you arrive too close to closing time you may not be served and will have to return at a later date.
- You may not need to come: Driver accreditation renewals and non metropolitan applications can be submitted at your local Vicroads office. So if it is too difficult to come in to the VTD just pop in to your local VicRoads office. VicRoads will not accredit you on the spot, but will accept and send your application to the VTD, who will then assess it and respond to you directly. ✤

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$70 FROM

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changes to pbbs

changes to the Performance Based Booking System

The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) has made changes to its Performance Based Booking System (PBBS) to increase the transparency, oversight and reliability of the program and continue to drive improvements in Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Services.

To be eligible for PBBS incentive payments, Network Service Providers (NSPs) who have signed up to this voluntary scheme will now be required to meet shorter response time targets.

The term of the new PBBS agreement is 12 months (rather than three years like the previous agreement), to allow for any future changes related to the Taxi Industry Inquiry process.

The VTD has already invited NSPs to be a part of the new PBBS and encourages any NSPs interested to contact the VTD on 1800 638 802. ✤

Taxi tolls as at 1 July 2012

CityLink (Linking Melbourne)

Western Link	$4.60
Southern Link	$4.60
Both Links	$6.60
Batman Avenue Only (Exhibition Street Extension)	No toll

EastLink

Melba tunnel or Mullum Mullum tunnel	$2.55
Any part of EastLink south of Maroondah Hwy	$2.41
One tunnel plus any part of EastLink south of Maroondah Hwy	$4.96
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. Prices are GST inclusive and are valid from 1 July 2012 until further notice.

® CityLink is a registered trade mark of Transurban Limited, ABN 96 068 143 410. ® EastLink is a registered trade mark of ConnectEast Pty Ltd.

Rural Taxi tolls as at 1 July 2012

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.

CityLink (Linking Melbourne)

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*

EastLink

Passes: EastLink Trip Pass (Ph: 13 54 65)

Roads covered: Valid for a single trip on EastLink in one direction only.

Toll: $5.57

***CityLink tolls are only valid for Country (C) or Urban (U) plated taxis. Prices are GST inclusive and are valid from 1 July 2012 until further notice.**

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New taxi tolls

From 1 July 2012 for travel on CityLink and EastLink

Drivers are reminded that new tolls now apply on CityLink and EastLink.

Updated toll stickers are available from your NSP or CityLink on 1300 360 962 / comcare@citylink.com.au.

For more information visit citylink.com.au. ✤

The four Horsemen

The exhibition will present 120 artworks from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.

Dr Gerard Vaughan, Director, NGV, said, "The Four Horsemen; Apocalypse, Death and Disaster - portrays an interesting epoch in modern European history when the ravages of war and disease prompted widespread fear of the Last Days. During this time, books and prints detailing terrifying creatures, diabolical witchcraft and unusual astrological phenomena were widely accessible to the European populace due to the emergence of printmaking – which was, in effect, the beginning of mass media."

Dr Petra Kayser, Curator, Prints and Drawings, NGV, said, "This was a period when the plague, famine and war were affecting the majority of the population in Europe and death could strike on a massive scale at any time. These circumstances led to a different awareness of mortality which is reflected in the visual culture of the period. "

Showing at the National Gallery of Victoria from 31 August. Wednesday - Mondays, 10am–5pm. Free entry ✤

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Get ready to hobnob with some of the biggest names in the galaxy – including Jupiter, Saturn and Venus – as part of the Melbourne Planetarium's after dark lecture series Discover the Night Sky 7.30pm every Thursday night in August with Scienceworks' resident astronomer Dr Tanya Hill.

"Discover the Night Sky programs are always a highlight of the year for any astronomy buff out there and we always like to add something new to the lecture series.

"This year we're going to take the time to step outside our own solar system and meet some of the exoplanets that make up planetary systems beyond our Sun. Is there life on any of those planets? There could be, and what's more, we might be close to finding out."

Discover the Night Sky combines an immersive planetarium experience with a relaxed social atmosphere complete with a glass of wine and cheese. If weather permits, the evening ends with stargazing through telescopes on the Scienceworks arena.

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educating visitors

about Melbourne's taxis

The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) launched a campaign to educate taxi passengers about some of the basics of catching a cab such as fares, tariffs, and how to lodge a complaint.

The VTD is concerned about the volume of complaints it receives regarding fare disputes between cabbies and their passengers - both tourists and locals.

To kick off this campaign, a series of advertisements appeared in Melbourne Airport and ran throughout the month of June. The ads illustrated the potential cost of a cab fare from Melbourne to some tourist hotspots.

They also promoted the taxi fare estimator, encouraging travellers to check the approximate cost of their trip before getting into a cab.

Information about Victoria's taxis is also in the June edition of the Official Visitors Guide and there is a new "Taxi Tips" page for passengers on VTD's website.

The VTD has also produced a brochure titled Getting around in Victoria's taxis and hire vehicles which will be available throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria in the coming months.

The VTD hopes these small initiatives may contribute to a decline in fare disputes and a greater awareness of the unique fare estimator tool.

If you have feedback about this campaign and ideas about how to help educate passengers about the unique services provided by Victoria's cabbies, please submit it to vtdcontact@transport.vic.gov.au.

save the date

Melbourne Tourism Industry Exchange
Tuesday 4 September, 2012 1pm - 4pm

ZINC at Federation Square, Corner Flinders & Swanston Streets, Melbourne

Now in its 5th year, this FREE event is a great opportunity to network and connect with the Melbourne visitor industry.

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have you seen him?

Deceptions in eastern and south eastern suburbs
28 to 29 January 2010

A man allegedly stole over $38,000 after fraudulently using a person's identification to change their PIN and withdraw cash from several banks.

The man used the victim's name and personal details to change the mailing address linked to the account over the phone. Several forms of the victim's identification were then presented at a bank branch where the PIN was changed.

The man withdrew large sums of money from bank branches in Blackburn South, Oakleigh, Mount Waverley, Glen Waverley, Clayton and Box Hill between 28 January and 29 January 2010.

He is described as Asian in appearance, aged in his 20s, with a slim build and short dark hair. He was seen wearing a dark coloured v-neck shirt.

Police have released an image of a man whom they believe may be able to assist them in their enquiries. (Reference no CA 6268) ✤

Call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a report confidentially online at www.crimestoppers.com.au. Please quote applicable reference number ✤

CRIME STOPPERS
1800 333 000
CRIMESTOPPERS.COM.AU

Brett McELLISTER

DATE OF BIRTH:	26-Jan-1974
HEIGHT:	179cm (5'10")
BUILD:	Medium
EYES:	Brown
HAIR:	Brown
COMPLEXION:	Medium

Where is Brett McELLISTER? It is alleged McELLISTER was involved in an aggravated burglary in Brighton in December, 2011. A warrant for his arrest has been issued. ✤

Paul Robert WRIGHT

DATE OF BIRTH:	09-Sep-1976
HEIGHT:	168cm
BUILD:	Medium
EYES:	Blue
HAIR:	Light Brown
COMPLEXION:	Olive

Police would like to hear from anyone who may know the current whereabouts of Paul Robert WRIGHT. It is alleged that MR WRIGHT was involved in an aggravated burglary in the Emerald area in March 2002. He was arrested and charged but failed to appear in court. Warrants have been issued for his arrest. ✤

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Apollo Gas	31	GLV Motors	39	Southern Cross Business Finance	6
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