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# TAXITALK

MAGAZINE

Official journal of the Victorian Taxi Association

Print Post Approved number 100004912 Issue Number 544

JULY 2013

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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VICTORIAN TAXI ASSOCIATION

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**PUBLISHER** ..... Trade Promotions Pty Ltd

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**David Samuel**  
VTA CEO

# reform reform reform

I am sure Tuesday 28 May 2013 will be remembered as an important day for Victoria's taxi industry. Since then much has been said and a good deal has happened. Some of it welcome, some not so welcome. With some much going on it is hard to fit it all into this relatively short editorial.

The Victorian Tax Association (VTA) has acknowledged the need to reform the State's taxi industry for some time. We have worked co-operatively with the Victorian Tax Industry Inquiry and the Victorian Government throughout the duration of the inquiry over the past two years.

Many of the announcements made by the Government on 28 May were sensible and built on the industry's own calls for reform. These are welcome. However, as has been well reported, some of the recommendations have the capacity to have a detrimental impact on our industry, especially small taxi businesses and consumers. These relate to licensing of taxis and hire cars (PBOs), the role of taxi booking companies, fares and fare structures and the Wheelchair Accessible Taxis Service (WATs).

Perhaps the greatest source of disappointment to us at the VTA, and many within the industry, was despite the co-operative approach adopted by the industry, the Government introduced a Bill (Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Tax and Hire Car

Reforms) Bill 2013) into the Parliament that fundamentally alter the structures that govern our industry with no consultation regarding its contents.

Since the release of the Government Response, the VTA has been investing a significant amount of energy in trying to create a fairer, and ultimately more effective, reform package. The work to date has focused on the legality of the Government Response, and also ensuring Members of Parliament (MPs) are aware of the implications (particularly the unintended ones) of a number of parts of the Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Tax and Hire Car Reforms) Bill 2013.

The VTA was pleased to host an industry event at Dallas Brookes Hall on Saturday 1 June. We had over 1500 attendees from across the State. The sense of concern, and to some extent confusion, surrounding the Government's announcement was more than evident. There were a number of speakers and I hope that most of the audiences' questions were answered.

I would like to briefly touch on the successes we have achieved, not just as an association but as an industry. These successes also represent a win for common sense. Despite strong advocacy and lobbying by the Inquiry to the contrary, we have seen both a consumer interest test and indexing included in the Government's plans for taxi licensing going forward.



We have also seen annual licence prices adjusted to better reflect previous market values and help ensure some fairness is achieved. I hope you all got to see the ads the VTA placed in the Herald Sun on Friday 21 June and Monday 24 June.

Areas that continue to concern the VTA, in relation to the Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Taxi and Hire Car Reforms) Bill 2013 broadly relate to:

- The Excessive and Consumer Interest Tests - we are keen to know how and when these will be run.
- Hire Cars/PBOs - we remain of the view that the release of these licences should also be subject to the Excessive and Consumer Interest Tests.
- 5% maximum non-cash payment surcharge - legislating this is a mistake. If the Government gets it wrong, and the companies involved are unwilling to provide the service at that price, Victoria could be left without electronic payment processing.
- WAT services - the incentives all seem to discourage servicing of the market for which WATs are intended.
- 2 Year fare setting and no adjustment for 12 months - we simply see this as unacceptable.

As well as working within the po-

litical process, the VTA have also spent a good deal of time with our lawyers looking at the Bill and trying to identify any areas where it may be possible to mount a legal challenge. The focus of this work has obviously been around the sections of the Bill that relate to licensing. Prior to the release of the Government Response it was difficult to get a thorough legal opinion because of the lack of detail around how licensing and other areas would actually be reformed. As we have explained a number of times, the legal advice we had received was not encouraging.

Since the release of the Government Response the VTA's lawyers identified several areas to focus our attention on in terms of a possible legal challenge. Obviously, the VTA have investigated these opportunities thoroughly and I have spoken publically about the fact that we were looking into it. While we are yet to receive the advice formally, it appears after further examination, that challenging key aspects of this Bill legally is, unfortunately, not feasible. It seems there are simply insufficient grounds to launch a legal challenge.

Of course, this does not preclude individuals or individual businesses from seeking their own advice. It is worth noting that the advice we received relates to the current Bill before Parliament only. There will be many more parts of

this reform package that will have to be looked at legally going forward.

It is really important to understand that all of this is just the first step in what will be a long process. There will be more legislation to come. Graeme Samuel (no relation) and Marnie Williams at the Taxi Services Commission (TSC) have made it clear that they want a collaborative approach. While we may not always agree, it is important as an industry we take such opportunities to help shape the industry going forward. Much of the detail surrounding what was announced on Tuesday 28 May is still to be determined and it is these processes that will inform it.

I know all this has come as a shock to many, despite the long lead in. I also understand that many are confused by what confronts them. If you do need assistance please do not hesitate to contact us, you are not alone in feeling somewhat overwhelmed. There is a lot to get your head around.

Finally, let me thank my staff, members and all those who have contributed to this ongoing challenge. One thing is for sure, I don't think there are many left wondering what we all think. Hang in there, and as I say, if you need assistance please do not hesitate to contact us. We are busy, but we will do our best to get back to you in a timely manner. ❀



Discover the real Ice Age and the majestic prehistoric animals that lived in this harsh and beautiful lost world, in the new action-packed IMAX film, *Titans of the Ice Age 3D*.

Dazzling computer-generated imagery brings the Pleistocene Ice Age to life in IMAX 3D, 20,000 years back in time when woolly beasts such as sabre-toothed cats, giant ground sloths, dire wolves and the iconic woolly mammoth existed alongside humans.

“Megafauna, like dinosaurs before them, were huge prehistoric animals and IMAX 3D is the perfect canvas to showcase these spectacular beasts in their natural habitat”, said Dr Erich Fitzgerald, Senior Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, Museum Victoria.

“The themes in *Titans of the Ice Age 3D* apply equally to Australia’s very own Ice Age giants, which included lost beasts such as the rhino-sized Diprotodon and the fearsome marsupial lion *Thylacoleo* that lived in Victoria not so long ago. These are megafauna we almost met, and the lessons revealed in *Titans of the Ice Age 3D* remind us how much our world has, and can, change.”

In *Titans of the Ice Age 3D*, audiences will uncover amazing fossil discoveries including baby Lyuba, a female Woolly Mammoth calf recently exposed by the melting Siberian permafrost, now one of the best preserved mammoth mummies in the world. Audiences will also discover the story of Zed, one of the most complete Colombian Mammoth skeletons ever uncovered, extracted in 2008 from under a Los Angeles parking lot next to the famous La Brea Tar Pits.

Narrated by Academy Award winning actor Christopher Plummer, *Titans of the Ice Age 3D* is shot on location at Yellowstone National Park, the Northern Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains and Alaska.

*Titans of the Ice Age 3D* opens at IMAX Melbourne Museum just in time for the winter school holidays on 20 June 2013. ❀



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# In the Candy Cab...

sweets that delight and heal



"No eating or drinking inside this car," reads a sign in Mansoor Khalid's cab, "Except candies."

There are plenty of them. Mr. Khalid keeps the back dashboard of his yellow cab stocked with a layer of candy thick enough to induce envy in the most successful trick-or-treater.

"Turn around; see what else is back there," Mr. Khalid recently told Legend Wilson, 7, who was riding in the cab with his mother, May Wilson. "There's a lot of options."

Ms. Wilson said that her son had plenty of candy at home. "Come on, he can have some; he's in the candy cab!" Mr. Khalid insisted. "I'll call you when he has to go to the dentist," Ms. Wilson said as her son collected a small pile of treats.

Free candy isn't the only perk of riding with Mr. Khalid, a 37-year-old electrical engineer from Pakistan who has been driving a yellow cab since 1996. He also recently bought a \$400 subwoofer that, in his words, makes "your heart go boom," and invites customers to plug their devices into the speakers. "Everybody is depressed, stressed, New York City is not an easy life, so when New Yorkers see all the candies, chocolates," they cheer up, Mr. Khalid said. "Some people start screaming, they're so happy."

His altruism isn't bad for business, either. Mr. Khalid's cab has become an Internet celebrity, earning thousands of followers on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. That loyal online following supplies a steady stream of

customers for Mr. Khalid, who fields frequent requests for pickups from fans who send their locations to him via Twitter or Facebook.

Mr. Khalid's customers certainly appreciate the effort. One rider, Casandra Johnson, was quiet during the first few moments of her ride with Mr. Khalid a few weeks ago, but perked up once she saw the stash in the back seat. "I was in a bad mood because I've been lugging boxes all day," she said, "You just totally changed my Monday."

Another passenger wrote on Twitter, "Sweetest ride in fifteen years. Left my bag of knitting there, but gained so much at heart when I googled you. God bless."

She was referring to the sombre back story of Mr. Khalid's generosity. His son, Saad, was born in 2010 with a congenital heart defect, and when Mr. Khalid visited him at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx after his night shift, he would bring coffee for the doctors and nurses there, who called him "coffee man."

"My average was 20 bucks every night, for coffee and sweets," he said. Saad died last April, only 18 months old. When Mr. Khalid returned to work, he decided to turn his cab into a rolling celebration.

Mr. Khalid learned from his time in the hospital that giving to others could at least hide, if not heal, his own feelings of loss. "I like to buy something for people; I feel good," Mr. Khalid said. "When you give something from your hand, you feel very good when someone gives a smile."

by Natalie Kitroeff ❀

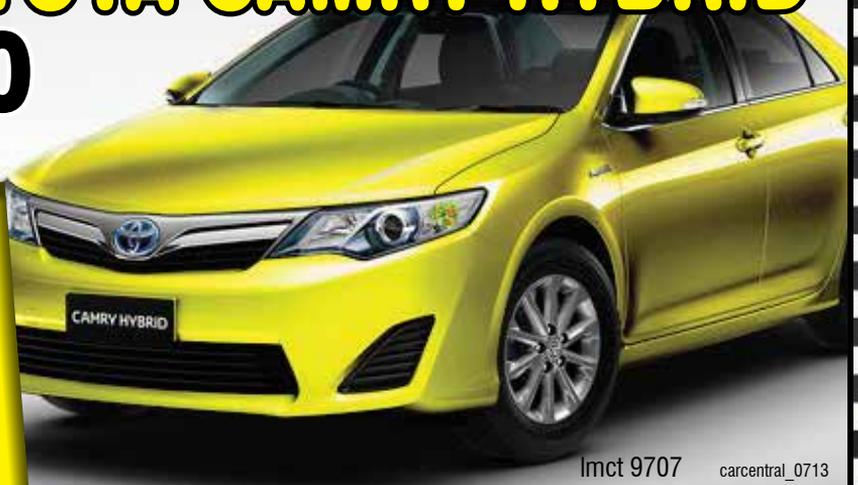
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ChargeIQ features a web interface and smartphone application that allows drivers to take advantage of flexible pricing to reduce the cost of their electric vehicle charging.

## Smart grid to manage **ELECTRIC CAR** charging

A world-first Victorian Department of Transport trial has found that drivers can halve their electric vehicle (EV) charging costs and utilities can optimise their network performance using ChargeIQ – an Australian-developed electric vehicle charger.

As part of the Victorian Government's Electric Vehicle Trial, DiUS Computing delivered a demand management demonstration project using Victoria's Smart Grid. The project, which ran from June to December 2012, was the first end-to-end use of Victoria's Smart Meter infrastructure for electricity demand management.

Developed over three years by Australian technology company DiUS Computing, ChargeIQ is the world's first ZigBee-certified EV charger with the ability to communicate with Smart Meters.

ChargeIQ features Smart Grid integration and allows electricity companies to work with consumers to adjust charging loads.

By providing drivers with enhanced visibility and control of their vehicle charging, ChargeIQ enables utilities and consumers to co-operate for real-time management of electricity demand.

The project found that drivers could save around \$250 each year – or about 50 per cent of their charging costs – without any sacrifice or effort on their part, using grid-friendly 'Smart' charging technology that will help keep electricity prices down for all consumers.

Amongst other findings, the project identified opportunities to improve consumer access and confidence in the Smart Grid.

A spokesperson from project partner United Energy, an electricity distributor servicing the core of the Melbourne metropolitan area, said the utility was open to technologies and innovations that could make better use of the electricity network and benefit all Victorians.

"The primary aim of the project was to understand the impact of large uptake electric vehicles on the electricity distribution network. The project helps make some progress towards achieving this objective," the spokesperson said.

Craig Memery, energy policy advocate from the Alternative Technology Association, Australia's leading not-for-profit promoting sustainable technology and practice, said that "this project has broken new ground in progressing Victoria's understanding of Smart Grid technology opportunities and issues".

Minister for Transport Terry Mulder said the project was an important aspect of the Victorian Government's Electric Vehicle Trial.

"The Electric Vehicle Trial is about preparing for our future transport needs, and this research will help guide and shape future decision making," Mr Mulder said.

"Research being undertaken through the trial will help us gain a better understanding about the timelines, processes and barriers for introducing electric vehicle technology in Victoria."

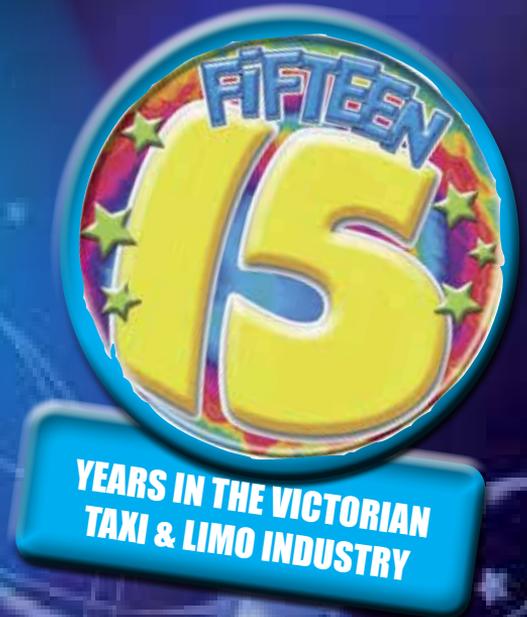
The Victorian Government's \$5 million Electric Vehicle Trial will run until mid-2014.

Visit [www.transport.vic.gov.au/evtrials](http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/evtrials) for more information. ❀

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## Kidnapping and Armed Robbery Footscray

A woman was kidnapped and robbed in broad daylight in Footscray on 2 May 2013.

The woman was parking her car on Byron Street at about 12:30pm when a man got into the passenger side, produced a pair of scissors and demanded she drive to the nearest ATM.

It is alleged the man indecently assaulted the woman, stole cash from her wallet and forced her to remove her wedding ring.

The woman was able to escape when the man instructed her to

pull over and withdraw money from a bank on Union Road in Ascot Vale.

Police have released images of a man whom they believe may be able to assist them in their enquiries.

He is described as Middle Eastern in appearance and approximately 20-30 years old. He was wearing a dark long sleeve shirt, khaki pants and a thick gold chain.

(Target Crime 26 / 13 - Quote reference no CA 6772) ❖



## Armed Robbery Clayton

A man armed with a picket fence piling robbed a service station in Clayton on 24 February 2013.

The man entered the Clayton Road store and approached the front counter at about 1:30am. It is alleged that he threatened to hit the attendant with the fence piling if his demands for cash were not met.

After taking cash from the till the man fled the store. He was last seen on foot on Centre Road.

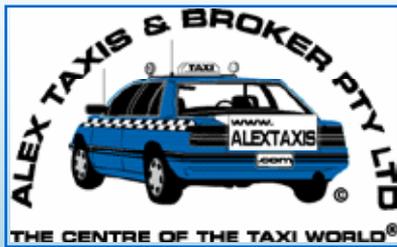
The man is described as being Pacific Islander in appearance, aged in his mid 20s, about 188cm tall, unshaven with a light moustache. He was wearing a black t-shirt with the word 'Dickies' on the front, dark coloured pants, black and white shoes and a grey baseball cap.

Police have released images of a man who is alleged to be responsible for the robbery.

(Target Crime 25 / 13 - Quote reference no CA 6763) ❖



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# New taxi tolls and passenger fares stickers

From 1 July 2013 there will be new taxi tolls for travel on CityLink and EastLink.

The taxi tolls are printed on the new Passenger Fares stickers, which are being issued by the new Taxi Services Commission.

## What do e-TAG 'beeps' mean?

Each time you pass under a toll point, your e-TAG should beep. Your e-TAG will emit the same beeps on both CityLink and EastLink.

**One beep:** Your account is in credit above the recommended level.

**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:** For a Late Toll invoice, please select one of the many payment options shown on the invoice, and make a prompt payment to avoid further administration fees.

## Topping up your account

**Easiest option: call CityLink to set up automatic payment.**

- At the CityLink Customer Centre: 67 Lorimer Street, Docklands 3008.
- At the EastLink Customer Centre: 2 Hillcrest Avenue, Ringwood 3134.  
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.

**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.

@CityLink is a trade mark of Transurban Limited, ABN 96 098 143 410.  
@EastLink is a registered trade mark of ConnectEast Pty Ltd.  
@e-TAG is a registered trade mark of CityLink Melbourne Limited, ABN 65 070 810 678.

Please attach **2** passenger fare stickers – one to the dashboard or windscreen (top left hand corner) and the other one inside rear passenger window.



PASSENGER FARES			
TAXI SERVICES COMMISSION			
Taximeter charges	Flagfall	Distance * charge/m	Time * charge/min
Tariff 1 standard	\$3.20	\$1.617	\$0.566
Tariff 2 late night (midnight – 5am)	\$3.20	\$1.940	\$0.679

\* Distance charges apply when taxi speed is above 21km/h. \* Time charges apply when taxi speed is below 21km/h.

TAXI TOLLS*	
CityLink	EastLink
Western Link \$5.10	Melba or Mullum Mullum tunnels \$2.61
Southern Link \$5.10	EastLink \$2.45
Both Links \$7.30	(any part south of Maroondah Hwy) \$2.45
Batman Avenue only (Exhibition St extension) No toll	One tunnel plus EastLink (any part south of Maroondah Hwy) \$5.06
	Ringwood Bypass No toll

\* Toll points are GST inclusive and valid from 1 July 2013 until 30 June 2014.

EXTRAS	
Booking fee: \$2	Airport rank fee: \$2
Charges apply for electronic payment	Airport pre-booking: \$3

PASSENGER FARES			
TAXI SERVICES COMMISSION			
Taximeter charges	Flagfall	Distance * charge/m	Time * charge/min
Tariff 1 standard	\$3.30	\$1.670	\$0.585

\* Distance charges apply when taxi speed is above 21km/h. \* Time charges apply when taxi speed is below 21km/h.

TAXI TOLLS*	
CityLink	EastLink
Western Link \$5.10	Melba or Mullum Mullum tunnels \$2.61
Southern Link \$5.10	EastLink \$2.45
Both Links \$7.30	(any part south of Maroondah Hwy) \$2.45
Batman Avenue only (Exhibition St extension) No toll	One tunnel plus EastLink (any part south of Maroondah Hwy) \$5.06
	Ringwood Bypass No toll

\* Taxis not fitted with a CityLink e-tag or Breeze tag will need to purchase:

CityLink day pass \$7.00	EastLink trip pass \$5.69
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\* Toll points are GST inclusive and valid from 1 July 2013 until 30 June 2014.

EXTRAS	
Booking fee: \$2.10	Airport rank fee: \$2
Late night fee: \$3 (midnight to 6am)	Airport pre-booking: \$3
Charges apply for electronic payment	

Prices are GST inclusive and taxi tolls are valid from 1 July 2013 until 30 June 2014.

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# Victorian Taxi Industry **reform** update



## Victoria's taxi industry is being reformed

On May 13 2013, the Victorian Government announced major reforms for Victoria's taxi industry, following the Taxi Industry Inquiry led by Professor Allan Fels. The reforms are outlined in the Victorian Government Response to the Taxi Industry Inquiry.

The following pages are a summary of the reforms that the Victorian Government wish to implement.

The Taxi Services Commission (TSC), which took over from the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) as regulator of Victoria's taxi industry on 1 July 2013, will be responsible for the progressive roll out of the reforms.

Up-to-date information will be available via the TSC website as changes are implemented.

# Summary of the proposed Victorian Government's 2013 Taxi Industry reform

## For the Industry

These changes aim to restore trust and confidence in the industry and put the customer first.

### A new zoning system

Taxis will operate within a new four-tier system of zones - metro, urban (including large regional centres), regional, and country. Separate licence fees will apply for each of these zones.

### Opening the market

The Taxi Services Commission will issue new licences as the market demands.

- There will be a set annual fee for licences to relieve pressure on overheads and fares.
- This fee will be lower in regional and country areas, and for wheelchair-accessible vehicles.
- Existing licences will still be able to be assigned and traded, as per current arrangements.
- A new 'consumer interest test' will apply to regional and country zones to consider the benefits of new licences for customers.

### More travel choices

Customers will have more choice of services through the removal of red tape for Pre-Booked Only cabs (hire cars) and more affordable travel, through changes to allow taxis to offer more flexible services such as share rides, discounted fares and set-route services.

### New opportunities to market taxis

There will be new opportunities to differentiate and better market taxi services to customers.

### Fares

Fares will be determined by the Essential Services Commission.

- Fare regulation will remain in metro and urban zones in the short to medium term, but fares will change from being prescribed fares to maximum fares. This will give operators the ability to offer discounts to their customers, such as lower fares to the airport.
- In regional and country areas, permit holders will be allowed to determine their own fares. They will be required to notify the Taxi Services Commission and customers of their fares.

### Branding

The requirement for urban, regional and country taxis to be painted yellow will be removed. The standard yellow livery will remain for metro taxis.

Advertising will be permitted on taxis, under guidelines set by the Taxi Services Commission.

### New services for customers

Authorised Taxi Organisations will have opportunities to

expand their business and provide better services for customers, by offering share rides and set-route services, and purchasing licences to offer more services at peak times.

## For Taxi Drivers

Permit holders will be required to ensure that taxi drivers benefit from a range of improvements that provide them with better training, pay and working conditions, and increased safety.

The changes aim to attract and retain high quality drivers, improve service standards, and create a safer and more enjoyable workplace for drivers.

### A new Driver Agreement between permit holders and taxi drivers

A mandatory Driver Agreement will include minimum terms, conditions and payment arrangements to be set out by the Victorian Government. Key features include:

- A 'safety net' income for the driver that is at least 55 per cent of takings
- Drivers must be allowed to take up to four weeks of unpaid leave where they have worked regularly for 12 months or more for the same permit holder
- Third party property insurance must be maintained by the permit holder and the driver indemnified for vehicle damage
- Dispute resolution mechanisms.

### Entry and Training

The existing Taxi Driver Accreditation Scheme will be overhauled, with improvements made to streamline the application process and to attract and retain high-quality drivers, including:

- A compulsory exam known as 'The Knowledge' for all new metro and urban taxi drivers, which tests driving skills, knowledge of local sites and routes, English language proficiency, safety awareness, and customer service skills, including providing services to people with a disability
- There will no longer be the option to undertake an independent driving assessment instead of having held a Victorian Driver Licence for a minimum of 12 months. 'The Knowledge' exam will include a driving component that assesses driving ability.

Making new licences available at affordable prices will give drivers an opportunity to run their own taxi business.

### Insurance

Legislation will require a permit holder to hold an insurance policy covering third party property damage. A permit holder will be responsible for paying the excess for claims.

### Improved safety

A number of changes will be made to address safety concerns raised by drivers and passengers. These include:

- Mandatory emergency duress alarms in taxis with hefty fines for operators found not to have an operational alarm
- Regulations requiring taxis to have GPS tracking, safety monitoring and emergency response capability
- Best practice guidelines for the establishment and operation of safe taxi ranks, including supervision and CCTV, and management of rank space
- Changes in regulation to allow better, safer and more accessible vehicles to be used as taxis, including purpose-built vehicles with safety features such as a separate driver compartment
- Driver protection screens remaining in place for at least three years
- Taxis must use child restraints
- There will no longer be the option to undertake an independent driving assessment instead of having held a Victorian Driver Licences for 12 months. 'The Knowledge' exam will include a driving component that assesses driving ability.

The Taxi Services Commission will undertake consultation on a safety strategy including the possibility of increasing penalties for assaults on taxi drivers by adding drivers to the list of 'protected occupations'.

## More service options

Changes to the way the hire car industry operates will make it easier for drivers to offer more service options. Removing the red tape for Pre-Booked Only (hire car) licences will encourage operators to expand their businesses, and give drivers the opportunity to expand into their own hire car business.

## Roles and responsibilities for taxi networks

The changes will create a more open, competitive, diverse and dynamic industry, and provide opportunities for industry participants to expand into new markets and attract new customers.

Taxi network service providers will become Authorised Taxi Organisations. Authorised Taxi Organisations will be responsible for:

- The services their members provide
- Publishing information about service performance
- Providing clear avenues for customers to resolve complaints.

## Entry and approval requirements for taxi networks

All Authorised Taxi Organisations and existing taxi networks will be required to meet entry and approval requirements. Authorised Taxi Organisations will be required to adhere to operating rules including:

- Actively monitoring the performance of operators and drivers to ensure they adhere to appropriate safety and service

standards

- Introducing customer complaint handling procedures in accordance with nationally approved standards
- Implementing disciplinary procedures for permit holders who fail to adhere to set standards
- Providing the Taxi Services Commission with data including booking performance, fares, driver infringement and complaints on all booked, rank and hail work.

Details of Authorised Taxi Organisations service performance will also be published by the Taxi Services Commission and be widely accessible to customers.

## Roles and responsibilities for permit holders

Permit holders will no longer be required to affiliate with a taxi network. They will be free to join one or more Authorised Taxi Organisation or operate independently, provided they meet strict service and safety standards and agree to greater oversight by the new Taxi Services Commission.

All permit holders will be required to:

- Ensure their taxis conform to strict safety regulations including GPS tracking, 24 hour monitoring and emergency response capability
- Be responsible for the services provided by their drivers
- Make information about their services and performance readily available
- Have a clear complaints handling system in place
- Adhere to new regulations in relation to taximeters and dome lights.

## Engaging drivers

A mandatory Driver Agreement will include minimum terms, conditions and payment arrangements to be set out by the Victorian Government.

Key features include:

- A 'safety net' income for the driver that is at least 55 per cent of takings
- Drivers must be allowed to take up to four weeks of unpaid leave where they have worked regularly for 12 months or more for the same permit holder
- Third party property insurance must be maintained by the permit holder and the driver indemnified for vehicle damage.

## For the Customers

Customers will benefit from a range of improvements that will provide higher quality, more reliable and safer services.

## Fairer fares

The fare structure will be improved through measures such as:

- Lower fares at off peak times and increased fares at peak times, such as Friday and Saturday night, to encourage drivers to work these hours

# Summary of the proposed Victorian Government's 2013 Taxi Industry reform

- Cutting the service fee for card payment from 10 per cent to five per cent
- Introducing a flat fee for booking high occupancy vehicles, instead of a variable charge based on the fare
- Regulated fares moving from prescribed fares to maximum fares, providing the ability for customers to be offered discounted rates, such as lower fares to the airport.

These reforms will help to address the practice of drivers refusing short trips and other issues, such as airport overcrowding.

## Better services for people with a disability

- People with a disability will benefit from better taxi services as a result of changes such as:
- Improved training for drivers to assist people with a disability
- Changes in regulations to allow more accessible and purpose-built taxis
- Measures to discourage wheelchair accessible taxis from doing non-wheelchair work
- 'Talking' taximeters to clearly communicate details of the fare.

The Taxi Services Commission, in consultation with stakeholders, will also begin development work for a new central booking service in metro areas to reduce wait times and provide more accurate booking information.

## Better information and complaints handling

Customers will have better access to information that will help them decide which services to use, and what to do if they experience a problem.

Improvements include:

- **A new Taxi Services Commission website**, with a public register listing information on industry performance and a list of Authorised Taxi Organisations with contact details and the type of services they operate
- **Better information within vehicles**, including clearer information about all components of the fare and details of the permit holder
- **A simpler complaint resolution process** that includes procedures to deal with customer complaints and better information for customers on how to provide feedback
- **Taxi availability clearly displayed** on dome lights.

## Country Victoria

Changes will be made to the way taxis operate in country areas to empower taxi companies to provide a personalised service free from the burden of regulations that exist in the city.

## More flexible and affordable services

People in country Victoria will benefit from new and more flexible taxi services, including:

- More affordable and accessible travel through services such as share rides, flat fares and set-route services

- Improving the supply of taxis and hire cars through the use of a 'consumer interest test' to assess the benefits of new licences for consumers, and making licences available at an annual fee
- Allowing permit holders to set their own fares, once approved by the Taxi Services Commission, to better meet local demand and expectation.
- Allowing operators to carry advertising on their vehicles to earn additional revenue
- Removing the requirement to offer taxi services on a continual basis, allowing taxi operators to set hours which better meet community needs

Changes to zones, entry restrictions and less restrictive Pre-Booked Only (hire car) licences will also create opportunities for taxi operators to grow their business by moving into new markets and attracting new customers.

## Better integration of services

Taxis and hire cars will be able to compete for contract work to fill the gaps in public transport services in regional and country Victoria, helping to reduce social exclusion and isolation.

Stronger representation of the Taxi Services Commission in regional areas, to better understand and address local service issues.

## Reducing costs for operators

Costs will be reduced by:

- Allowing operators to carry advertising on their vehicles to earn additional revenue
- Removing the requirement to offer taxi services on a continual basis, allowing taxi operators to set hours which better meet community needs
- Removing the requirement for taxis to be yellow.
- Removal of unnecessary costs and regulation

## Better services for regional and country customers

People in regional and country Victoria will benefit from new and more flexible taxi and hire car services through changes including:

- Operators being able to provide options such as share rides, flat fares and set-route services
- Introduction of Pre-Booked Only cabs (hire cars)
- Incentives to encourage a greater supply of taxis and hire cars in regional and country Victoria
- New zoning arrangements which allow taxi operators to work across a broader geographical area and better meet demand
- The potential for taxis and hire cars to 'fill gaps' in the public transport network. ❀

On 6 June 2013, David Samuel, VTA CEO, wrote to Terry Mulder, Minister for Public Transport and Roads outlining their concerns with the *Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Taxi and Hire Car Reforms) Bill 2013*. The VTA believes that the bill may have unforeseen and undesirable consequences. Listed in the table below are a number of sections of the legislation that the VTA believe require amendment.



**Limitations of the *Transport Legislation Amendment (Foundation Taxi and Hire Car Reforms) Bill 2013* and proposed modifications**

Issues in current amendment bill	Proposed solutions
<p>1. <b>Fixing prices in legislation</b> during a period of major industrial reforms commits Government to prices without the flexibility to quickly respond to unexpected outcomes.</p> <p><b>Urban licence prices</b>, as set out in the Bill, have been set too low.</p> <p><b>Fare review</b> timeframe and ongoing review cycle is unreasonable.</p> <p><b>45/55 Split</b> – this is simply unsustainable.</p> <p>The immediate change to the maximum allowable <b>electronic surcharge</b> (to a maximum of 5%) is not based on any reasoned argument, and should not be changed without rigorous analysis by the ESC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licence values (and prices generally) should not be defined in the legislation.</li> <li>• Licence values in Urban areas should be priced the same as Metropolitan licences (\$22K).</li> <li>• Regional licences should be lifted from \$11K - \$17K.</li> <li>• There should be a greater gap between licence prices for conventional and WAT licences.</li> <li>• The ESC fare review should be completed within 3 months.</li> <li>• The surcharge on electronic payments should be reviewed by the ESC (see above for new timeline) in conjunction with the fare review, and no changes be made in the meantime.</li> <li>• Fares should be reviewed on a 12 month basis (not every 2 years).</li> <li>• Mandated 50/50 split in Driver Agreement not 45/55 as set out in Bill.</li> </ul>
<p>2. <b>Excessive entry test</b> – the current lack of information on how the test will be developed and deployed is extremely concerning.</p> <p>The <b>sunset clause</b> applied to the power of the Commissioner to suspend issuing of licences should not be legislated at this time.</p> <p><b>Taxi and PBO licences must be considered under the same test</b>, at the same time, to ensure excessive entry is controlled and not simply shifted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The power of the Commissioner to suspend issuing of licences should not be sunset in 3 years, but should be reviewed at this time to make a considered decision in light of impacts on the industry and its customers.</li> <li>• The excessive entry test should be run on 1 Jan every year to determine the availability of new licences.</li> <li>• The annual test should consider both taxi and PBO licences.</li> </ul>
<p>3. <b>Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs)</b> – the proposed fare structure with higher peak fares and lower off-peak fares will destroy incentive for WAT drivers to work during day shifts, when most WAT work for the disability community is done.</p> <p>The Government response indicates <b>MPTP</b> card holder trips will be subsidised at the metropolitan fare rate in Country areas.</p> <p>Lack of enforcement/quotas relating to requirement for these licences/permits to do this work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ESC terms of reference should give the ESC freedom to consider all industry conditions when developing the new fare model.</li> <li>• The ESC should specifically consider how the new fare model incentivises (or otherwise) drivers to do WAT work for the disability community.</li> <li>• The Government has given power to Regional and Country operators to set their own fares. Once the TSC has approved an operator’s fare model, MPTP card holder’s trips in country areas should be subsidised at the same percentage (but not rate) as metropolitan based card holders.</li> </ul>



All data on this page is provided by the Victorian Taxation Directorate and is for the month of May 2013

## Number of Taxi Licences

<b>METROPOLITAN</b> (including 504 WAT vehicles)	<b>4,197</b>
<b>COUNTRY</b> (including 115 WAT vehicles)	<b>508</b>
<b>OUTER SUBURBAN</b> (including 33 WAT vehicles)	<b>160</b>
<b>URBAN</b> (Ballarat - Bendigo - Geelong) (including 35 WAT vehicles)	<b>233</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> (including 687 WAT vehicles)	<b>5,098</b>

### NUMBER OF DRIVERS

Active drivers	15,845 APPROX
Accredited drivers	25,562 APPROX

## ASSIGNMENTS

metro taxis	118
average metro licence assignment price	\$2,497

## LICENCE TRANSFERS

metro taxis	4
outer suburban	0
urban	0
country taxis	2
hire car licences	7
special licences	4

## LICENCES ISSUED

taxi licences	0
hire car licences	1
special vehicles	0
RH vehicles	2

## HIRE CAR LICENCE VALUE

**\$57,286**

average metro hire car licence transfer value for the month of May 2013

## Number of Victorian Hire Vehicle Licences

Metropolitan Hire Cars	945
Country Hire Cars	65
Special Purpose Vehicles	811
Restricted Hire Cars	614

**TOTAL 2,435**

## Compliance outcomes

Taxi Inspections	1,337
Rectification Notices	277
Infringement Notices	13
Notices of Unroadworthiness	119
Official Warnings	23



In this current issue they look at some of the amazing animals that survive in the harsh, white world of Antarctica.

John Cooper takes us inside his incredibly built tower to peek at a family of kestrels. And we bet you haven't had a chimpanzee climb unexpectedly into your arms – well, Fiona Mikowski has and she tells all about her amazing experiences at Ape Action Africa.

There are also some fun Secret Sightings, like romantic Green Tree frogs, and the O'Mahoneys snap some busy creatures in their Secret Shutterbugs feature. Plus lots more.

Wildlife Secrets have been hard at work getting the magazine up into the cloud and available for viewing on iPads, Android devices, PCs and Macs.

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\*T.A.P. Pics for illustration purposes only. E&OE. LMCT 10618. MCT109605



# INDUSTRY MEETING

After a long and anxious period of inquiry, the Victorian taxi industry eagerly awaited the Government's response to the reforms recommended by the inquiry. The response finally came on Tuesday 28 May 2013 and ever since, the industry has been coming to terms with what it means for their businesses, families, customers and futures.

In this context, it was important for the Victorian Taxi Association (VTA), in collaboration with the Taxi Industry Stakeholders Victoria (TISV), to offer an opportunity for the industry to come together, to hear about the reforms, understand the implications and discuss the way forward. Over 1500 people gathered at Dallas Brooks Hall on Saturday 1 June.

The tone of the meeting reflected the spectrum of reactions felt throughout the industry, but a sense of shared concern and a need to face the future united was evident. In a time of great uncertainty for many, it was good to see such an impressive turnout and taxi industry colleagues coming to-

gether to share information about the road ahead.

A panel of speakers, comprised of representatives from Network Service Providers, multi-operators, TISV and VTA Executive Councilors, was available to the audience to answer questions and reflect on the impact of the reforms. Under difficult circumstances, so soon after the reforms had been announced, the panel endeavoured to answer all questions from the audience. A big thank you to the panel for their role on the day.

Importantly, there is a great deal

of detail about the reforms which has yet to be defined. Over the coming year there will be a range of opportunities for the industry to be involved in consultations with the Taxi Services Commissioner to influence this detail. We encourage everyone to be actively involved in this process. The VTA will promote the opportunities to the industry as they arise.

We thank all those who supported the event and attended on the day and we hope the industry can continue to move forward with a spirit of unity. ❀

<p><b>FOR</b> <b>TAXI</b> <b>REPLACEMENT</b> <b>VEHICLE</b></p> <p><b>GLV MOTORS</b> <small>Imct 8168</small> <b>0418 362 521</b></p>	<p><b>SALE</b></p> <p><b>FORD FALCON</b> <b>FG XT MK2 SEDAN</b></p> <p>12/2011, dual fuel - injection lpg and petrol, Vic taxi yellow, Taxi RWC supplied SN469</p> <p><b>\$26,500</b></p>
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\*CONDITIONS APPLY

# TAXI SERVICES COMMISSION



Marnie Williams  
VTD GM

**U**ntil June 30 the Victorian taxi and hire car industry was regulated by the Victorian Taxi Directorate which was a division of the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI). As part of the recent taxi and hire car industry reforms, the government established a new regulator, the Taxi Services Commission (TSC). On 1 July 2013, regulation of the taxi and hire car industry transfers from the Secretary to the Department and becomes the responsibility of the TSC. On 1 July 2013 the Victorian Taxi Directorate will transition into the new Taxi Services Commission. ❀

On 28 May the Victorian Government announced its response to the Taxi Industry Inquiry supporting the majority of the recommendations. Heading up the new statutory authority in the Taxi Services Commission will be three new commissioners Graeme Samuel AC (Chair), Douglas Shirrefs and Merran Kelsall.

Key foundation reforms include:

- Removing the regulatory restrictions on metro and urban licence numbers and issuing new licenses to approved applicants at fees to be indexed annually (CPI minus 0.5 per cent)
- Setting these annual fees at levels that will promote a measured increase in taxi and hire car numbers, allow an increase in the taxi driver's share of fare revenue and provide some support for the equity and income positions of existing licence holders
- Relaxing regulatory control of country taxi services
- Capping the level of service fee for the electronic payment of fares
- Introducing an enhanced independent and comprehensive exam for new taxi drivers
- Establishing the core objectives, functions and powers of the Taxi Services Commission, including new data collection powers

The proposed reforms constitute the most significant overhaul of the taxi industry in Victoria's history, and will deliver substantial improvements that will benefit taxi drivers, passengers and the Victorian community.

Given the magnitude of the reforms they will take time to implement. Industry changes will be progressively rolled out in a measured and consistent approach in consultation with stakeholders.

For further details on the reforms please visit [www.taxi.vic.gov.au/taxi-reform](http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au/taxi-reform).

If you have any specific queries, please email us at [contact@taxi.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@taxi.vic.gov.au) ❀



### **Mr Graeme Samuel AC – Chair**

Mr Samuel was most recently Managing Director of Greenhill Caliburn Pty Ltd, an independent investment bank. He held the position of Chairman of the ACCC between 2003 and 2011. Previously Mr Samuel was President of the National Competition Council, Chairman of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust and a Commissioner of the Australian Football League. Graeme is currently a council member at Australian National University and Adjunct Professor at Monash University's Faculty of Business and Economics. Mr Samuel holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Melbourne and a Master of Laws from Monash University



### **Mr Douglas Shirrefs**

Mr Shirrefs is a Barrister and Economist. He is a serving company Director at the Victorian Bar and was formerly a solicitor with Minter Ellison specialising in competition and consumer law, including franchising. Douglas is a qualified economist and company director and has also worked in senior roles for the ACCC. Has served as a Regulatory Economist for both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.



### **Merran Kelsall**

Ms Kelsall is a professional independent company director and qualified as a chartered accountant. Merran is currently Chairman of Australian Health Service Alliance Ltd, and Director of Superpartners Pty Ltd, serving in both positions since 2011. Ms Kelsall was Chairman of the Public Transport Ombudsman Limited between 2004 and 2012. ❖

## **New labels and New colours**

On 20 June 2013, the vehicle specifications applicable to Victorian taxis were amended to deliver on two reform recommendations.

Outer suburban, urban and country taxis are no longer required to be painted in Victorian Taxi Yellow. The TSC is aware many networks and operators will choose to keep a yellow fleet, but others, particularly in more remote areas, will appreciate the new flexibility and savings.

The TSC has also created new passenger information labels for display inside taxis. The labels provide clearer and more prominent information on passenger fares and charges, the presence of taxi safety cameras, and how to provide feedback.

A formal notification of the changed specifications has been sent to all current taxi operators and licence holders. If you have not received the letter, you may wish to confirm that the TSC has your correct postal details. ❖

## **Transport Safety Officers**

From 1 July taxi drivers may notice the presence of officers dressed in grey coloured uniforms.

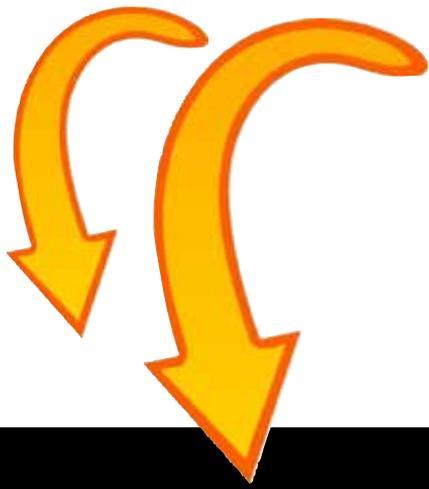
As the taxi industry regulator changes to the Taxi Services Commission (TSC), Transport Safety Officers (TSO) and vehicles will no longer resemble the familiar Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) green.

Moving away from the dark green, compliance officers under the TSC will be geared in a new charcoal grey design.

Badges and logos crucial to agency identification have also changed to reflect the TSC brand.

Vehicles remain white, but will still be clearly distinguishable with yellow reflective chequered decals and new TSC branding and insignia.

For more information on the new uniforms, vehicles and role of our TSO's, visit the TSC website on [www.taxi.vic.gov.au](http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au) ❖



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195 65 15 \$ 85	235 45 17 \$ 90
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225 50 16 \$115	235 40 18 \$110
225 55 16 \$120	245 40 18 \$125
225 60 16 \$105	245 45 18 \$120
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225 50 17 \$115	185 R14 \$ 75 LT
225 55 17 \$115	195 R14 \$ 85 LT
235 60 17 \$145	195 R15 \$100 LT

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## Driver Accreditation

Every week approximately 43 accredited commercial passenger vehicle drivers have their accreditations suspended because their driver's licence is either suspended, cancelled or expired.

Your driver's licence and your driver accreditation are integral to your livelihood as a professional driver. It is therefore imperative that you obey the road rules at all times when driving a commercial passenger vehicle or a private vehicle.

If your driver accreditation is suspended as a result of your driver's licence being suspended, cancelled or expired you must remember that your accreditation is not automatically reinstated once your driver's licence is reinstated.

A review of your suitability to hold accreditation must be conducted by the TSC and due to the regulatory framework and investigations required this may take some time. The key message is **obey the road rules** and avoid this process all together. ❀

## Taxi-cab Operators

is your affiliation information up to date?

All taxi-cab operators are reminded that they must provide the TSC with an up to date Depot/NSP acceptance letter.

- If you have changed Network Service Providers recently please ensure you have updated your details with the TSC.
- If you have made amendments to your assignment agreement mid agreement (for example a change to the monthly assignment fee) you must provide an updated copy of your assignment agreement to the TSC.

Acceptance letters and Assignment agreements can be faxed to the TSC Accreditation and Licensing branch at 03 8683 0777. ❀

## Licensing Reminder

A reminder to taxi-cab and hire car owners that you must ensure you have an "Authority to Register" issued from the TSC before you attend a Vi-cRoads officer to transfer a vehicle.

Please note that a transfer cannot be finalised until all outstanding monies are paid including annual licence fees (these fees cannot be paid at Vi-cRoads or TSC offices, payment options are listed on the invoice for your convenience).

It is recommended prior to purchasing vehicles for use as a taxi-cab or hire car that you refer to the TSC website at [www.taxi.vic.gov.au](http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au) to ensure that the prospective vehicle meets vehicle standards, specifications and age requirements. ❀



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