

Industry Update - Safety Screens & Cameras.

1) New Security Camera Specifications

The VTD recently released the new function and performance specifications for security cameras in Victorian Taxis.

One of the key changes, as a result of the specifications, is that country taxis fleets of 10 or more cars will now be required to have a camera installed in each vehicle. This change has been met with mixed responses – yet most country operators and NSPs have expressed that they are pleased to have the same security capability as their metropolitan counterparts.

The specifications have also set out requirements for the camera to be able to capture images outside of the vehicle. This will help provide further security for drivers should an incident occur outside of the vehicle.

The VTA is still waiting on further information from the VTD regarding cost and rollout timelines for the new cameras. What we do know is that new taxis registered after January 2010 will have to be fitted with the new camera.

On the whole we believe that the new specifications are a step in the right direction and we are pleased to support initiatives that help improve the safety of drivers. We understand that some in the industry remain concerned about the cost. The VTA will certainly be pushing for the camera costs to be included in this year's fare review.

2) Mandatory Driver Safety Screens

An issue that has been causing some angst in the industry relates to the mandatory purchase of driver safety screens for metropolitan, outer-suburban and urban taxis. This particular issue is causing more difficulty than it should. The VTA is aware that some do not share the Government's enthusiasm for screens, however the debate has been run and the decision has been made.

The Government has been quite clear in its instructions and all operators need to ensure they comply with the licence conditions. If they do not, the Taxi Directorate has demonstrated that it will apply penalties, revoke accreditation, and even revoke the licence and/or licence assignment of the perpetrators.

As stated earlier, the VTA knows that there are differences of opinion regarding the effectiveness of driver safety screens, however at the end of the day one has to carefully consider whether it is worth losing your business over the non-purchase of a screen.

For more information on the new camera specifications and driver safety screens please visit VTD's website: <http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au/>.

And the 2009 Achiever Award goes to...



2009 Achiever Award winner, David O'Donoghue with Neil Sach, CEO

Understanding the importance of industry innovation, each year, the VTA presents an award to a person within the taxi industry who has achieved something extraordinary in their own business, network or for the industry in general. The award is sponsored by Road Safety Inspection Pty Ltd.

The recipient of the 2009 Achiever Award, David O'Donoghue, was announced at VTA State Taxi conference which was held last month at Torquay.

David O'Donoghue, of Benalla Taxis, is also the Chairman of the VTA north east regional committee. Kevin Gange, President of the VTA, spoke highly of the recipient noting he was an asset to the industry.

'David is a person who has quietly achieved great things in Benalla, not only for the community, but for other VTA members in the north east region and for his own business. We are happy to be presenting him with this award,' said Mr Gange.

Victorian Taxi Association Inc.

Suite 2/85 Salmon Street, Port Melbourne 3207
P.O. Box 5111, Garden City 3207

Phone: 9676 2635 Fax: 9676 2643

Email: las@victaxi.com.au Web: www.victaxi.com.au

Photography by: Simon Birch
www.simonbirch.com.au



VTA TRANSMISSION

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CEO's Welcome.

This, the second edition of Transmission, focuses on the changes to the road rules which come into operation on 9 November.

The rule changes of particular importance to taxi operators and drivers include:

- Use of mobile phones and Sat Nav devices
- Solid centre and lane lines and painted traffic island lines
- Tram lanes and tramways
- Child restraints and seat belts

Taxi arrangements and operations at Melbourne Airport continue to be of concern. The VTA is particularly concerned about the number of incidents where drivers have been injured and continue to be confronted with potentially injurious situations.

The Government through the Department of Transport has been surveying users of public transport (including taxis) to gain a handle on performance. The following is information given by the Taxi Directorate at the recent VTA State Taxi Conference.

The Taxi Industry Pulls Together - Again!

No one would doubt that it has been a hard couple of months for some taxi drivers, operators and networks after the Silver Top fire and the glitch with some EFTPOS machines.

However, it was pleasing to once again see, so soon after the Silver Top fire, the industry working together to overcome the problems associated with the glitch.

Overall customer satisfaction

- Metropolitan taxi services = 60.7%

Customer satisfaction with other modes

- Metropolitan trains, trams & buses = 57.6%
- Regional trains = 73.2%
- Regional coach = 76.3%

The survey indicated that this overall level of satisfaction with taxis is being dragged down by such things as driver hygiene, unwillingness to take short trips, lack of knowledge of streets and venues, and inadequate communication skills.

Whilst the survey is what it is and is no doubt driving Government policies and actions, the VTA is not satisfied that the survey is adequately targeted and that more work needs to be done to drill down into detail and look for constructive outcomes.

If you have any issues or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the VTA on 03 9676 2635 or by email at: las@victaxi.com.au

Neil Sach
Chief Executive Officer

The work done by Cabcharge to rectify the glitch was quite an achievement in technological and logistical terms. Furthermore, the broader industry's pragmatic response helped limit the impact on taxi users, operators and drivers.

Once again, well done to all!

Changes to Victoria's Road Safety Rules.

From 9 November 2009, there will be changes to Victoria's road safety rules. Reviewing our road rules helps to make sure they are meeting current traffic conditions and assists road users get to where they are going as safely and efficiently as possible.

All taxi-cab drivers must be aware of these road rule changes that affect the way they carry out their work. The following will give you an overview of the changes that will be occurring from 9 November 2009.

1) Seatbelts

What will the rule be?

In the case of a passenger 16 years of age or older the passenger is responsible for wearing a seatbelt while being transported in a taxi-cab.

If the passenger is a child under the age of 16 the driver is responsible for ensuring the passenger is appropriately restrained. Children between 0-1 may be held on an adult passengers' lap in the back seat. Children between the ages of 1-16 must be restrained in an approved child restraint or by a seatbelt. Children under the age of 4 years must be in a rear seating position, not in the front seat.

How has it changed?

In effect the rule as it applies to seatbelts hasn't changed for taxis, but the wording has.

2) Child Restraints and Booster Seats

What will the rule be?

Taxi-cabs will continue to be exempt from child restraint requirements. However, parents are encouraged to use their own restraints where possible. When there is no suitable child restraint available a seatbelt must be worn. (see above)

How has it changed?

As with seat belts the rule isn't changing for taxis. An exemption remains for the law as it did for the old rules as far as taxi drivers are concerned.

3) Visual Display Units

What will the rule be?

A driver can use a driver's aid (such as a Sat Nav) but it must be an integrated part of the vehicle design, or secured in a commercially designed holder, which is fixed to the vehicle.

How has it changed?

The current rule does not require that the device is an integrated part of the vehicle design, or secured in a commercially designed holder, which is fixed to the vehicle.

4) Mobile Phones

What will the rule be?

A driver cannot use (including texting, video calls and email) a mobile phone unless, making or receiving a phone call on hands free unit, and the body of the phone is secured in a commercially designed unit fixed to the vehicle or, the phone is not secured and the use of the phone does not require the driver to touch any part of the phone.

How has it changed?

The current rules simply state that the driver of a vehicle cannot use a hand held mobile phone. The new rules provide for greater clarity.

5) Lane Lines

What will the rule be?

A driver must not change lanes over a continuous lane line.

How has it changed?

This is a new requirement. Continuous lane lines previously had no specific meaning.

6) Centre Dividing Line

What will the rule be?

A driver will not be able to overtake, or do a U-turn across a single continuous centre line, or a single continuous line to the left of a broken line. Exception to this is when a driver is entering or leaving the road.

How has it changed?

Previously a driver was allowed to do a u-turn or overtake across a single continuous centre dividing lane.

7) Painted Islands

What will the rule be?

A driver must not drive over a painted island that is surrounded by a single continuous line. However a driver can drive over the island if entering or leaving the road, or entering a turning lane that begins immediately after the painted island.

How has it changed?

The adoption of the single continuous lane line or centre line now applies to the boundary line of a painted traffic island.

8) Tramways

What will the rule be?

Tramways are identified similar to Tram Lanes but have two continuous yellow lines to the left of the tram track or some form of dividing structure; they were not formally recognised in the previous road rules.

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How has it changed?

A driver is not permitted to drive in a tramway unless the driver needs to avoid an obstruction but must not obstruct a tram or public bus travelling on the tramway.

9) Parallel parking

What will the rule be?

If the road has a continuous dividing line or a dividing strip, the driver must position the vehicle at least 3 metres from the continuous dividing line or dividing strip, unless otherwise indicated by information on or with a parking control sign.

How has it changed?

This rule has been added to the existing parallel parking rules, to provide for the new meaning of a single continuous centre line.

10) Slip lane Parking

What will the rule be?

Stopping to park in a slip lane or on a painted island will be prohibited. A slip lane is an area of road for vehicles turning left. It is separated from other parts of the road by a painted island or traffic island.

How has it changed?

This was not formally recognised under the previous road rules. The exception to this road rule is;

(a) A parking control sign applies to the place where the driver stops; and

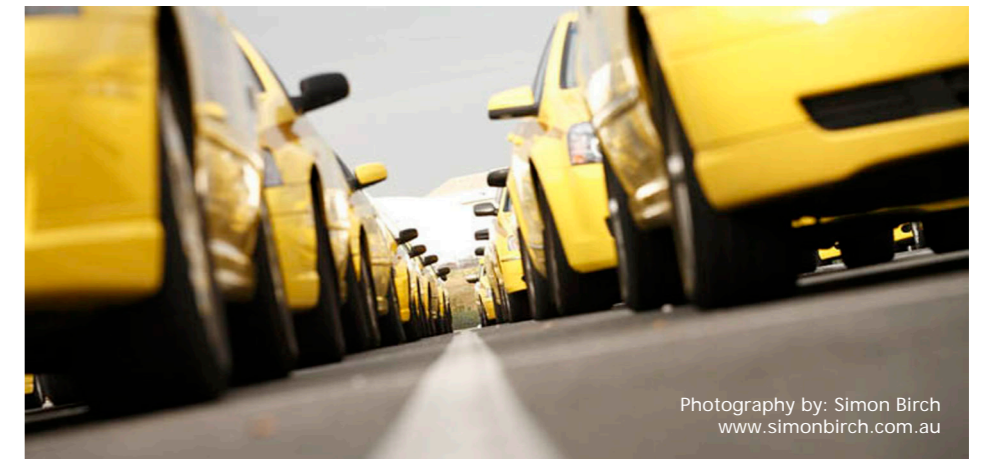
(b) The driver is permitted to stop at that place under these Rules.

Want more information?

For further information or diagrams to gain a better understanding of road rule changes please go to:

www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/roadrules

vic roads



Photography by: Simon Birch
www.simonbirch.com.au

Melrose Drive holding bay, the forefront of drivers concerns.

A call for change at Melrose Drive.

In response to a spate of recent driver injuries and assaults at the Melrose Drive holding bay, the VTA called a meeting late last month to once again bring to the fore issues surrounding driver behaviour and driver safety at Melbourne Airport.

Over the past four weeks the Melrose Drive holding bay has experienced a steep increase in driver incidents, with two accidents involving drivers being hit by taxis, and numerous reported and unreported driver assaults. The rise in incidents at the Melrose holding bay is a direct result of inconsiderate and generally appalling behaviour by a small percentage of drivers.

Both VTDA and CARA driver groups as well as many senior drivers have advised that the majority of incidents occur when drivers leaving their position in the rank and then expect to slot back into the same position when they return. Touting, tailgating, poor signage and lighting were also raised as issues of concern amongst drivers.

The meeting which was attended by Australia Pacific Airports Melbourne (APAM), the Victorian Taxi Directorate, driver group representatives, Federal Police and driver services from Black Cabs, revealed concern from all in attendance about the current situation and the need to establish a safer workplace

which fosters a fair go for all taxi drivers.

There was also consensus on the need for a unified effort by all groups. If this matter is to be resolved each party must play a part, this includes VTD as regulator, APAM, the Federal Police, drivers, NSP's, operators and the VTA.

One of the major initiatives arising as a result of the meeting is APAM's consideration of a 24 hour CCTV at Melrose Drive. The VTA supports this initiative and believes it would go a long way to improving driver behaviour and safety.

Alongside this initiative APAM is also considering better signage, lighting and speed humps. The Federal Police have commenced a month long campaign of increased presence and information gathering on the ground at Melrose Drive and NSP's are addressing poor behaviour of drivers through the implementation of a driver re-education course.

Over the next few months the VTA will be working with the Federal Police, driver groups and NSP on improving driver knowledge. Two of the ways we hope to do this is through the staging of driver forums and distribution of education materials which specifically relating to driver behaviour.