



# VTA TRANSMISSION

EDITION 13, AUGUST 2011

## CEO's Welcome

Welcome to the August edition of *Transmission*.

The Taxi Industry Inquiry is the centre of activity at the VTA with investigations and submission writing being the order of the day.

The work being undertaken by our communications and public relations consultant CPR has now started to take shape and have an impact.

Input from VTA members, taxi operators and taxi drivers is helping enormously to shape the VTA's thinking about and input to the Inquiry.

So far the VTA has made numerous contributions to the Taxi Inquiry, including:

- A submission addressing the Inquiry's discussion paper
- A submission focusing on the regional taxi service
- A summary of what the VTA sees as the key issues that require attention
- A report on the New York taxi system prepared for the VTA recently, and
- A copy of the VTA's Contracted Services Pack.

The VTA has also prepared a report on the New Zealand taxi service. This document, and all those listed above are available on the VTA's website.

**Neil Sach** | VTA CEO

## Mandatory Prepay Stickers

It is compulsory for all Victorian taxis to display two external and either one or two internal prepaid labels at all times. This law came into effect on 1 August 2011.

A limited number of the stickers have been distributed to NSPs for collection at no cost.

Prepaid stickers can also be collected at the VTD office in Melbourne (Level 23, 80 Collins Street Melbourne) or from the VTD's inspection centre at Melbourne Airport.

Once the VTD stock runs out, replacement external stickers will need to be sourced by licence holders and operators in the same manner as other taxi livery labels. Internal labels will be available from the VTD.

For complete details please visit the VTD website at: <http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/taxis?OpenDocument>



## New VTA Staff Member

The VTA welcomes Georgia Halliday to the VTA team. Georgia replaces Marike Knight who left the VTA earlier this year. Georgia's role is stakeholder communications and projects.

## New camera rollout

As of 1 July 2011 a camera installed in a new vehicle or a replacement camera installed in an existing vehicle must comply with an approved VTD camera under the 2009 specifications. This applies to all taxis operating in the Metropolitan, Outer-Suburban and Urban (Geelong) taxi-cab zones & taxis operating at Shepparton and the Mornington Peninsula.

Taxis fitted with a VerifEye TSCS Mk IV camera system that was already fitted and operating in the taxi as at 30 June 2011 may continue to operate with that camera system until 30 June 2013.

After this time (from 1 July 2013) taxis must be fitted with a camera system approved by the VTD under the 2009 specifications.

All other 2001 specification camera systems will cease to be approved on 1 July 2012.

Taxis operating in the Urban (Ballarat and Bendigo) taxi-cab zone must, from 1 July 2011, be fitted with a camera system approved by VTD under the 2009 specifications.

Country taxis operating at locations supporting 10 or more taxis must order and have installed a camera system approved by VTD under the 2009 specifications by 30 June 2012.

Country taxis operating at locations supporting less than 10 taxis may at any time install a camera system approved by VTD under the 2009 specifications.

For further details please refer to the VTD website at the following address: <http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/taxis/taxis-drivers/safety-cameras-in-taxis>

## Silver Top moves back home

During August, Silver Top Taxis will progressively move its various operational areas back to its rebuilt home at Rupert St, Collingwood.

The rebuilt Silver Top headquarters has been purpose built to meet the needs of its network services and the other important services it provides to its affiliated operators.

The new building is visually impressive, flexible in use, and very high tech.

## Social Media

The taxi industry must keep pace with the brave new world of social media. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are becoming an increasingly popular means of communicating. As many would note, the Taxi Industry Inquiry have been using Twitter as a way of getting news and their messaging to the public.

The VTA believes it is important that the industry has an online presence and is in the process of rolling out a number of initiatives. The first to get up and running has been on twitter.



Follow us @victaxis

## No more BSX

Victorian Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder, announced the Department of Transport has not extended its agreement with BSX Services Pty Ltd (BSX) to manage the trading arrangements associated with the transfer and assignment of taxi licences in metropolitan Melbourne.

The VTA has always been opposed to the licence trading scheme introduced by the former Government. From the start, the VTA's opposition stemmed from the increase in administration costs, the accelerator effect on increasing assignment fees, and the potential for graft and price gouging.

Unfortunately it has taken nearly nine years to remove this millstone of both the notion and the being of the BSX/NSX based licence trading scheme from around the neck of the industry. We truly hope that the damage done to the industry by the licence trading scheme is not irreparable.

The new rules and procedures can be found at the DOT website

The VTA appreciated the VTD invitation to contribute to recasting the process to be implemented following the end of the BSX/NSX system. The starting point for the VTA was to dump the lot and return to what was in place before the trading scheme was introduced. It was also important to the VTA that Government (through the DOT and VTD) take responsibility for the whole process of licence assignments and transfers and not rely on a third party to establish the integrity and fairness of the system.

## New surcharge provision

Please be aware that amendments to the Transport (*Compliance and Miscellaneous*) Act 1983 now require any late night or holiday surcharge be retained by the driver of the taxi.

This amendment was introduced into the Act during 2010. The VTA was not notified of the change. However, it is important to share with the industry.

The section of the Act is 144(da), and it states; "... that any late night surcharge or holiday surcharge payable by a passenger in a taxicab is to be retained by the driver of the taxicab;...".

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the VTA on (03) 9676 2635.

## Operator and driver committees

The VTD recently established operator consultative committees and re-established their driver consultative committee. The VTA were pleased to be invited as independent observers.

The operator committees have been split into two - a small operator committee and a large operator committee. This model seems to work because it ensures the views of all the different industry stakeholders are heard.

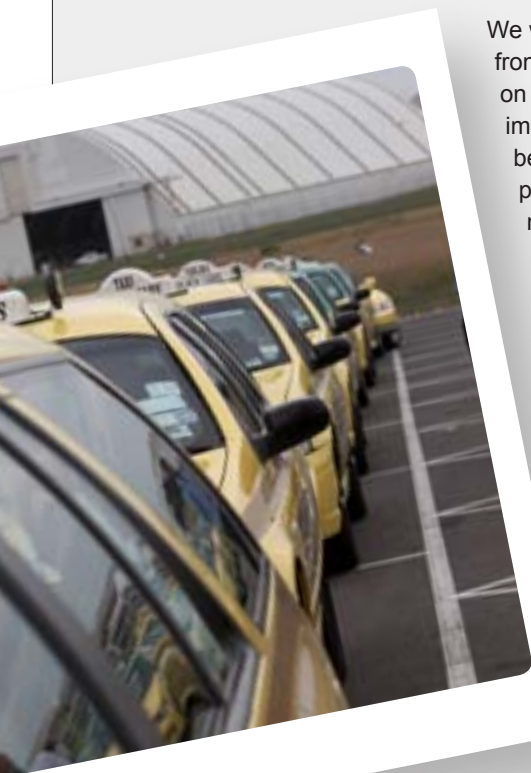
The VTA was pleased to see a strong regional presence at the meetings. Both the small operator and driver committees have members from country Victoria. While the issues may diverge somewhat, it is great to see industry people sharing their experiences.

On the whole the conversations were positive. An interesting feature was the fact that all three groups discussed a very similar range of issues. The VTA looks forward to seeing this initiative move forward over the coming months. Congratulations VTD, a good initiative.

## Airport new model

Melbourne Airport still continues to provide headaches for drivers and operators alike. The VTA, as part of its submissions to the Taxi Industry Inquiry, is formulating a new model for how the airport could improve its operations.

We welcome feedback from industry participants on what changes or improvements could be made to current processes or what new or improved infrastructure is required to ensure a good working model at the airport. Please email all feedback and ideas to [las@victaxi.com.au](mailto:las@victaxi.com.au).

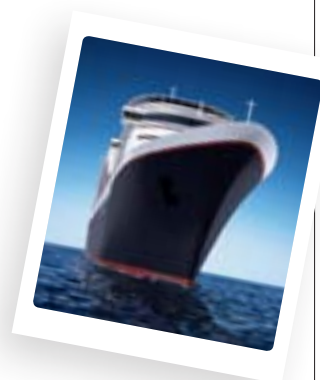


## Cruise ship dates

The dates that Peak Service Taxis will be authorised to operate to service the 2011-2012 cruise ship seasons are as follows:

### DATES:

Wednesday 14 December 2011  
Tuesday 27 December 2011  
Monday 9 January 2012  
Sunday 22 January 2012  
Saturday 4 February 2012  
Friday 17 February 2012  
Thursday 1 March 2012  
Wednesday 14 March 2012



### TIMES:

Authorisation applies to taxi hirings that commence between the hours of 7.00 am and 3.00 pm on each of the dates specified above. The Port of Melbourne Corporation's Cruise Ship Schedule indicates that cruise ships arrive at 7.00 am and depart at 4.00 pm on the dates specified above.

### CONDITIONS:

(a) On the dates and during the times specified above, Metropolitan Peak Service Taxis are

authorised to operate for the carriage of passengers from the Station Pier precinct, Port Melbourne;

(b) Subject to (c) below, Metropolitan Peak Service Taxis will not be authorised to carry passengers from places other than the Station Pier precinct under this authorisation;

(c) Despite (b) above, if a Metropolitan Peak Service Taxi has been hired for a journey from Station Pier and that same hirer subsequently requests the driver to undertake a return or extended hiring, including from a place the hirer was conveyed to on the initial journey, the driver may accept and fulfil that subsequent hiring; and

(d) Metropolitan Peak Service Taxis are not authorised to undertake any street hire (rank/hail) or radio bookings during these extended hours other than as provided in (a) or (c) above.

These dates correspond with the arrival of cruise ships that will disembark significant passenger numbers at Station Pier. The Port of Melbourne Corporation and the company representing these cruise ships anticipate that many passengers leaving the ships at this point will require transport to alternative transport terminals including Melbourne Airport and suburban destinations.

Providing a restricted authorisation for Metropolitan Peak Service Taxis to boost taxi resources will assist the industry to meet this expected demand and provide Peak Service Taxi drivers with additional work opportunities.

For the purposes of this notice, the Station Pier precinct is: Station Pier, Waterfront Place, and Beach Street, Port Melbourne, between Bay Street and Swallow Street, Port Melbourne. Operation of Peak Service Taxis during these extended hours is optional, not compulsory.

## WAT'S online

As many country operators and depots are aware, the biggest obstacles to any up-skilling or training initiatives within the Victorian taxi industry include the distance required to travel to the place of training, the relevance of the information and the cost associated with the person being away from their place of work.

The current WAT program offered in metropolitan Melbourne is delivered over 3.5 days and instructs on various State and Federal Acts, disability types, communication and customer service along with the practical aspect of loading and unloading of passengers.

To assist our country drivers TITV has released the WAT course online. The online course enables taxi drivers to log on to the training module and complete the training at home, making the learning easily accessible to people regardless of their physical location.

The online training course can be accessed via the VTA website, or directly at [www.titv.com.au](http://www.titv.com.au)

## Driver X

I felt compelled to write this story and post it on the VTA website after seeing a number of negative stories about taxi drivers in the print and television media over the last couple of weeks.

While I was in the process of responding to media enquiries associated with such stories, I received a call from a driver I met recently. He has been good enough to volunteer his time to work with the VTA on initiatives relating to the Taxi Industry Inquiry. He was ringing to inform me that he was unable to attend a meeting because on the previous Saturday night he was randomly assaulted.

He explained to me how he was standing with another driver having a chat at Clayton railway station when a man walked up to him and proceeded to punch him in the face, breaking his nose. The attacker "bravely" fled the scene as soon as the driver fell to the ground. There was no reason for this attack and there was certainly no provocation.

In explaining his situation to me the driver said, "Oh well, these things happen." I explained to him they shouldn't. Nobody should have to put up with feeling scared or intimidated in their workplace. It is not good enough that taxi drivers have come to expect that from time to time they will be victims of random acts of violence.

The aspect of the story that I find sad and troubling (apart from the obvious assault of another human being) is the fact that no one from the media outlets I was dealing with at the time of receiving the call, or the community at large, will ever know this cabby's story.

Rather, their views will continue to be informed by stories that relate to a small minority of industry participants – the likes of whom we would all like to see removed from our industry. As a result, the perception of our industry, and most importantly that of the drivers who stand on the front line, will continue to be diminished.

It would appear that the stories we read in newspapers and see on television are starting to heavily impact on the lives of ordinary taxi drivers. The genuine and increasing lack of respect for taxi drivers in the community is most concerning. Stories like the one outlined above demonstrate this. We need to better understand why this is happening.

A key role of the Taxi Industry Inquiry should be to facilitate this discussion. With the profile and breadth of the Inquiry there is an opportunity for all stakeholders to come together and discuss how we can address perception of taxi drivers in the community.

We rarely hear about other service providers being attacked in their workplace, yet we know that there are now numerous serious assaults on taxi drivers every week. Why do some people seem to think taxi drivers are fair game? And how much do the stories we see contribute to this view? One thing is for sure – it is getting a whole lot harder to recruit and retain good taxi drivers.

*David Samuel*

VTA Policy and Communications

## Change at VTD

Around mid September, VTD General Manager, Peter Corcoran, will leave the VTD to take up the role Director of Marine Safety in Transport Safety Victoria. The VTA wishes Peter all the very best in his new endeavour.

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