

taxi INDUSTRY INQUIRY



Professor Allan Fels AO

A Taxi Industry Inquiry is currently underway into all aspects of the taxi and hire car industry. At its conclusion, the Inquiry will recommend a set of reforms to the government focused on achieving better outcomes for the travelling public.

Following the Inquiry, a Taxi Services Commission will take over the role of industry regulator, giving it the powers and tools necessary to reform the taxi industry.

The Taxi Services Commission will be established as a statutory authority, at which time VTD staff and resources will move across to the new body.

Until this time, the VTD will operate as normal. I would like to reinforce the fact that there are no changes to the current obligations and responsibilities of any accredited and/or licensed industry participants in the taxi and hire car industry.

As a taxi driver, you have an opportunity to play a part in shaping the future direction of the industry. You can do so by providing feedback to the Taxi Industry Inquiry team on the details below.

Email: taxiindustryinquiry@transport.vic.gov.au
Twitter: www.twitter.com/taxiinquiry
Facebook: Taxi Industry Inquiry
Post: Locked Bag 20046, Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone: 1800 829 444.

VTD needs your e-details



Over the coming months, the VTD will be switching over to a more electronic platform for communicating with the industry. This will enable the VTD to provide more timely and detailed information to drivers, operators, NSPs and other important industry stakeholders.

If you wish to register to receive notifications from the VTD, please send your email address, and mobile phone number and DC number to vtdcontact@transport.vic.gov.au

Alternatively, fill out the reply paid response card and mail to the VTD.

Criminal data checking to crack down on rogue drivers



The Victorian Taxi Directorate has announced a new criminal data matching initiative to boost the safety of commercial passenger vehicle (CPV) passengers.

All drivers will now be subject to continuous checking for criminal offences.

The new arrangement will ensure that the VTD is made aware of any charges and/or convictions laid against an accredited driver.

All drivers consent to such checking on application and renewal of accreditation.

Prepaid fares in practise



Pre-paid fares

The VTD is aware of instances where a taxi driver takes a passenger's mobile phone or other valuables as 'security' if a passenger doesn't have cash to pre-pay a fare.

Use of private property for prepayment of fares in lieu of cash or card payment is not permitted.

When asked to prepay a fare, a passenger must pay the fare estimated by the driver as a deposit by cash or card payment before the trip starts.

Passengers paying by cash should give this amount to the driver at the start of the trip. The driver will then give them a receipt for the prepaid amount.

Customers paying by EFTPOS or credit card will have their card swiped at the beginning of the trip so payment can be pre-approved.

The driver must then refund the difference to the passenger if the final taximeter reading is less than the prepaid deposit.

If the final taximeter reading is more than the prepaid deposit, then the passenger must pay the balance to the driver.

The driver may refuse to carry anyone who cannot demonstrate to the driver's reasonable satisfaction that they are able to pay the amount of the estimate of the fare, either by cash or by card.



Tackling MPTP fraud

Hundreds of thousands of people with a disability across the State depend on the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP) to stay connected with their community.

Drivers need to be vigilant when using MPTP cards and are urged to familiarise themselves with the correct procedure involved with processing of MPTP fares, especially in relation to the lifting fee. A copy of the Correct Charging of Fares pamphlet can be obtained from the VTD.

Instances of alleged MPTP fraud will be fully and actively investigated by the VTD. Drivers who commit MPTP fraud run the risk of losing their accreditation and, in some cases, criminal charges.

In recent months, investigations relating to alleged MPTP fraud led by the VTD resulted in charges being laid against industry participants.

Inappropriate or suspicious use of MPTP cards can be reported to the VTD on 1800 638 802 (toll-free) or by email on vtدينvestigations@transport.vic.gov.au



Uniform reminder

As we approach the summer months, the VTD wishes to remind drivers that they are required to wear taxi company-approved uniform at all times.

Formal footwear should be worn – no casual footwear such as thongs and sandals is appropriate.

The VTD Transport Safety Officers will enforce this requirement and will issue infringement notices to drivers wearing incorrect uniform.



Drive safely at Melbourne Airport

The Airport is a busy place and with a lot of pedestrians around, you need to take particular care.

Watch out for pedestrians at all times, and slow down at pedestrian crossings and roundabouts.



Be on the look out for pedestrians.

Cruise Ship Season



The VTD has authorised metropolitan peak service taxis to operate between 7am and 3pm from Station Pier precinct, Port Melbourne*, on the days specified below.

- 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

*The Station Pier precinct refers to Station Pier, Waterfront Place and Beach Street, Port Melbourne, between Bay Street and Swallow Street, Port Melbourne).

Peak service taxis are not allowed to undertake any street hire (rank/hail) or radio bookings during these hours other than from Station Pier.

TSOs out in force

Over the coming months, VTD Transport Safety Officers (TSOs) will be out in force undertaking covert and uniformed blitzes across the State.

TSOs have a wide range of regulatory powers to enforce compliance within the industry.

In particular, as part of a new initiative dubbed "Project FRET", the VTD will commence covert compliance operations targeted at drivers who refuse short fares.

If you do the wrong thing, you will be caught.



VTD Transport Safety Officers will be out in force this Spring Racing Carnival and Festive season.

Help keep Victoria safe

Terrorism remains a threat to people living in Australia and as a taxi driver in Victoria, you are in a position to help prevent attacks before they happen.

When at work be aware of your surroundings and report anything that seems suspicious. Does an abandoned bag look different or out of place? Have you heard conversations that alarm you?

If you suspect terrorism related activity, report it and help keep Victoria safe.



Changes to English Language Requirement

Applicants for metropolitan taxi and hire car accreditation who are from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background are now required to supply an English language certificate as part of their application rather than provide the certificate or be assessed by the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) conducting the driver accreditation training.

In addition, an English language certificate will now only be accepted if the assessment has been conducted in Australia in the last 12 months by an RTO which is authorised to assess English language competency and issue a certificate.

This requirement will take effect for applicants for commercial passenger vehicle accreditation across the State from 5 December 2011.

Applicants who have any questions or require assistance are advised to visit www.taxi.vic.gov.au or contact the VTD on 1800 638 802 (toll-free).

Changes to driver accreditation application and renewal processes at VicRoads

From 5 December 2011, applications for driver accreditation and applications to renew driver accreditation will not be processed on the spot at VicRoads offices across the state.

From this date, applications lodged at VicRoads offices will be forwarded to the VTD for processing.

Once your application or renewal has been assessed by the VTD you will receive your accreditation certificate in the post. This process may take up to 10 business days.

If you are submitting your application for renewal at a VicRoads office on or after 5 December 2011 please ensure that you submit it at least 2 weeks before it is due to expire.

Please note that applications will be accepted at the VTD office in person and will be processed on the spot.

Applications for renewal of driver accreditation are sent out 8 weeks in advance. To ensure their accreditation does not expire, drivers are urged to submit their application for renewal as early as possible.

Quality assurance of driver accreditation training

From Monday, 3 October 2011, the VTD will commence a quality assurance programme to report on the skills and knowledge of applicants for Metropolitan Taxi and Hire Car Driver Accreditation that have passed driver training with a VTD recognised Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Under the new arrangement, some applicants who present their Taxi Training Passport or Taxi Training Register at the VTD to obtain a driver accreditation will be randomly selected to undertake a mandatory summarised test of the driver accreditation training and Knowledge of Melbourne test by a VTD representative. The test will take approximately 30 minutes.

All new applicants for Metropolitan Taxi and Hire Car Driver Accreditation will be asked four, on-the-spot questions before being issued an authority to proceed to training. These questions are designed to assist in identifying any areas of weakness before training commences.

This new process will help the VTD ensure new drivers have the skills and knowledge they need to drive in Melbourne.

If you require further information about this new process, please contact the VTD.

New VTD website

You may have noticed that the VTD website (www.taxi.vic.gov.au) has a new look. Take time out to explore the site and update your bookmarks where appropriate.

The VTD is currently reviewing the structure of the website to improve usability and accessibility. If you want to provide feedback, please email vtdcontact@transport.vic.gov.au



Serving with distinction

The VTD often receives positive feedback from passengers about drivers who go above and beyond their duty.

Recently in the media, Dandenong taxi driver Salin Adoujaber was praised for saving a passenger's life by helping him to get to a hospital.

Drivers like Salin are a tremendous credit to the industry and set a benchmark that all drivers should aspire to.

The VTD looks forward to receiving more positive stories about drivers showing their utmost professionalism and representing the industry with distinction.

Taxi Driver Forum

The VTD has hosted its first meeting of the newly formed Taxi Driver Forum.

Many issues were raised by forum members including driver safety, remuneration and customer service.

The forum members are your representatives so if you wish to discuss an issue or have them raise any industry specific matters, then contact one from the list below.

First name	Surname	Email	Region	Phone
Ali	Abou-eid	sameh.aboueid@live.vu.edu.au	Metro	0419 560 502
Kashif	Bouns	kbouns@gmail.com	Metro	0423 110 269
David	Brumby	david@brumby.net.au	Metro	0408 987 633
Chris	Coucill	ccoucill@gmail.com	Country – Numurkah	0428 256 640
Cliff	Hayes	taxicliff@net2000.com.au	Metro	0418 500 543
Nibret	Kassa	nibretkassa@hotmail.com	Metro	0415 964 382
Muhammad Tayab	Mahmood	tayab_chinyoty@live.com.au	Metro	0432 377 359
Raj	Singh	australia_raj@yahoo.com	Metro	0406 474 651
Robin	Smith	robinpatsmith@bigpond.com	Country – Bairnsdale	0410 469 768
Amanda	Webb	oddcouple@sunet.com.au	Urban – Geelong	0432 595 265
Gloria	White	N/A	Outer suburban – Frankston	0418 627 595
Murad	Yonis	muradabdullahi@hotmail.com	Metro	0402 756 407

Increased fees and infringements

Effective 1 July 2011, taxi infringement amounts have increased under Government indexation of fees and penalties. Below are some of the most common infringements and the corresponding new amounts.

For a comprehensive list, visit www.taxi.vic.gov.au

Infringement	Previous amount	New amount
Failing to wear uniform	\$149	\$153
Stopped in a taxi zone	\$149	\$153
Failing to comply with condition of driver accreditation (EFTPOS login)	\$299	\$305
Operating outside conditions of licence	\$149	\$153
Failing to display driver photo card in taxi-cab	\$149	\$153

New wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) lifting fees apply from 1 September 2011.

The fees have been revised in line with changes in the Consumer Price Index (Melbourne, All groups).

Fee	Previous amount	New amount
Lifting fee for WATs in metropolitan Melbourne	\$14.65	\$15.20
Lifting fee for conventional taxis in outer-suburban, urban and country areas	\$7.35	\$7.60

Taxis at the Langham Hotel

It is reported that a significant number of taxi drivers are using the private property area of the Langham Hotel as a public drop-off area for passengers destined for other locations in Southbank.

City of Melbourne has requested that taxi drivers not enter the Langham Hotel Private Property area unless they are picking up and dropping off guests of the hotel.

Instead, taxi drivers should use the on-street "No Parking – 5 minute limit" parking areas provided in the Riverside Quay to drop-off passengers.



Taxi Incident Information System

Victoria Police has established a new incident reporting system for the taxi industry.

The new system will enable Victoria Police to better identify problems within the industry and allocate law enforcement resources to tackle critical issues.

A copy of the taxi incident notification form is available for download from www.taxi.vic.gov.au

Important: In emergency situations, driver should still dial '000'.



Carriage of passengers in wheelchairs and on mobility scooters in wheelchair accessible taxis

All drivers have a legal requirement relating to safe driving practices and the wearing of seat belts by passengers. In addition, taxi licence conditions require wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) drivers to:

- securely restrain wheelchairs or scooters being carried in the taxi
- maintain high standards of interaction with passengers in a manner which preserves the passengers' dignity and safety
- store luggage or other goods in a manner so as not to endanger passengers or interfere with the movement of passengers into or out of the vehicle
- not drive a WAT unless the driver has successfully completed a WAT driver training program approved by the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD).

Also, the WAT licence conditions do not allow lifting equipment attached to the vehicle to be operated by any other person other than the driver unless the driver is incapacitated by accident or illness.

Passengers in wheelchairs

In the case of taxi passengers travelling in a wheelchair, drivers must ensure that:

- the wheelchair is securely restrained by applying restraints to the floor from two points on the front and two points on the rear of the wheelchair frame
- the passenger is secured by a seat belt fitted to the taxi and which has been properly adjusted and fastened in the manner in which the seat belt is designed to be worn
- each wheelchair position is provided with a lap and sash emergency locking type seatbelt
- the wheelchair is positioned with the occupant facing towards the front of the taxi and with the wheelchair located between the appropriate restraint attachment tracks/points on the floor.



WAT drivers must ensure that passengers in a wheelchair are secured properly.

Passengers using scooters

A passenger who uses a mobility scooter must:

- not be transported in a taxi while that person is seated on the scooter
- be seated in a conventional passenger seat for the duration of the journey and wear the seat belt provided for that position.

The scooter must be fitted with restraints to prevent movement of the scooter during the journey. In the event that the scooter cannot be safely secured and restrained within the taxi, the scooter must not be carried.

Restraints

Restraints must comply with the version of AS-2942 Wheelchair Occupant Restraint Assemblies for Motor Vehicles current at the time the vehicle was first licensed as a taxi or comply with a later version of AS-2942.

Hoists on WATs

The hoist fitted to a WAT must:

- only be used to load and unload a passenger who is seated in a wheelchair or on a mobility scooter
- not be used as a means of access by passengers who are not properly seated in a wheelchair or on a scooter.

Carriage of passengers

WAT drivers are reminded that in addition to possible legal action they may face arising from negligence, the VTD will move to suspend or revoke the driver accreditation held by any driver proven to have failed to fully and properly restrain a passenger in a wheelchair or has attempted to transport a wheelchair or scooter and its passenger in any manner which is not consistent with the above mentioned requirements.

Visiting the VTD?

Hundreds of taxi industry participants visit the VTD Customer Service Centre every week. Below are some helpful hints to ensure you get the most of our interaction with the VTD.

- On arrival, please provide the security officer with correct and full details of your query
- Most application forms can be obtained from the VTD website (www.taxi.vic.gov.au)
- Carefully read and follow instructions on a legal letter – in most cases, visits to the VTD are not required
- The Centre has restricted space so it is preferred that applicants attend on their own or with a limited number of friends/family members
- Remember that the VicRoads counter is not available between 1pm and 2pm
- To ensure you are seen to, please arrive as early as possible. Visitors who arrive too close to our closing time may be asked to return at a later date, if their query cannot be dealt with prior to 4:30pm.

Please note that a Code of Conduct applies to visitors of the VTD Customer Service Centre. Verbal abuse, threats or acts of violence towards another person – visitor or staff – will not be tolerated.



Customer Service Centre

Level 23,
80 Collins St.,
Melbourne.

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday:
8.30am to 4.30pm

Wednesday:
9.30am to 4.30pm

Contact the VTD

General enquiries: 1800 638 802 (toll free)

Postal address: GPO Box 2797
Melbourne VIC 3001

Street address: Level 23, 80 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Email: vtdcontact@transport.vic.gov.au

Visit www.taxi.vic.gov.au for the latest news from the Victorian Taxi Directorate.

Driver conduct warning

As set out in the Public Care Objective, taxi drivers are required to provide a service with safety and comfort, amenity and convenience at all times.

It is disturbing that the VTD has recently received a number of complaints from female passengers who reported instances where drivers made suggestive comments of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment is completely unacceptable and unlawful. Drivers who are found guilty of conducting themselves in such a manner face disciplinary action, including a review of their accreditation.

Do you know your emergency standard operating procedures?

FOCUS ON SAFETY

When travelling at night, drivers can encounter aggressive and often intoxicated passengers.

In the lead up to the busy Spring Racing Carnival and Festive seasons, it's important that drivers re-familiarise themselves with emergency procedures to ensure they are always equipped to deal with potentially dangerous situations.

Drivers are urged never to leave their vehicle in case of an altercation with a passenger. Staying inside the vehicle provides the driver with the security of a Taxi Safety Camera to assist Victoria Police with identifying and prosecuting offenders.

In an emergency, drivers should call Victoria Police on 000.

