

**2006  
International  
Taxi Conference**

**Perth  
April 2 - 6, 2006**

**“Who’s  
Driving  
Who?”**

**2005  
STATE REPORTS**



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## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Introduction

2005 has been a challenging and productive year for WA's taxi industry that resulted in increased levels of consumer and industry confidence. This was reflected in growth in demand for taxi services as with increases in taxi fares and licence values.

The main challenge fronting the taxi industry occurred later in the year when the State Government introduced a Bill in to the Parliament in attempt to buyback 56 Multi-Purpose Taxi (MPT) Licences. This Bill did not pass through the Upper House and was sent to a Standing Committee for review in 2006.

In addition to aforementioned lobbying activities, the Taxi Council of Western Australia (TCWA) also focused resources and effort into pursuing legal remedies in effort to curtail the State Government from lowering the maximum taxi licence lease rates. Ultimately, the TCWA strove to obtain some sensible and sustainable policies from the Government that would provide the industry with some clear direction and economic certainty.

Despite these challenges, the TCWA managed to maintain levels of industry confidence, viability and high level of service performance to the community. More specifically:-

- The regulatory environment was maintained
- The demand for taxis increased
- Returns to taxi drivers increased (including a fare increase of 4.8%)
- Shift lease rates (Friday and Saturday nights) increased by 4.1%
- Taxi licence values increased by over 4%
- Public awareness and recognition for taxi drivers increased

Despite relations with the Government being strained at times, the TCWA continued in its endeavours to improve relations and work collaboratively.

During the year, the TCWA devoted resources and effort in to hosting events, increasing positive public awareness and developing new service initiatives. One such service initiative was the 'innovative transport hub' proposal that entailed the integration of taxi services with other modes of Public Transport and an increase in fleet utility.

There is still opportunity for the Taxi Council to improve communications and relations with the Government and this continues to remain a focus for the Council.

### **Maintaining a Regulatory Environment to Protect Member Interests, Service Performance and Industry Viability**

#### *Regulation and Service Performance*

**W**  
**A**

The taxi industry in Perth remains regulated and this in turn, ensures that the high levels of driver and vehicle standards, operator viability, safety and service to the community are maintained. During 2005, service performance levels continued to achieve around 90% efficiency and the demand for taxis increased.



### *Industry Viability*

In December, a fare increase of 4.8% was granted. Shift lease rates for Friday and Saturday nights were increased by 4.1% at this same time.

Despite the Government releasing an additional 68 Government taxi licences, plate prices and industry viability remained firm. The average taxi plate traded for \$208,281 representing a 4% increase from the 2004 average price of \$200,200.

This level of economic growth coupled with the continuing increase in the demand for taxi services was encouraging.

### *Taxi Policies*

The Taxi Council continues to advocate for clear and sensible policies to be adopted in respect to the following:-

- Future plate issues to be based on service performance standards (i.e. only issue plates where and when they are needed)
- All regulated charges (fares, plate and shift leasing rates) to be pegged and adjusted annually in keeping with the movements in the CPI or PMI (whichever is the greatest)
- A plate ownership incentive scheme for drivers
- No State Ownership of Taxi Plates (i.e. that the Governments role is to regulate the taxi industry and not to compete with it)
- Wheelchair passengers and operators of wheelchair accessible taxis to have a choice of taxi company
- Wheelchair accessible taxi operators to be provided with a 'lifting fee' incentive

Whilst some of these policy issues are still being debated, it was pleasing to note that the Minister did agree to provide a choice of taxi company for wheelchair passengers and operators and introduced a \$5 diesel 'lifting fee' for wheelchair accessible taxi operators.

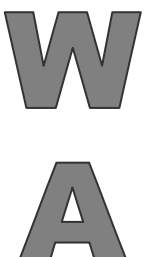
It is imperative to the economic stability of the taxi industry, that the Government sets clear and economically sustainable policies that will protect industry viability, service performance and maintain fair returns to all industry participants.

### **Increasing Taxi Driver and Industry Recognition**

The Council's 2005 "WA Cabbie Day", held at the Burswood Entertainment Complex in November, was a huge success and attracted hundreds of taxi drivers and supporters to join the industry's festivities and to recognize and congratulate the Taxi Driver of the Year winner, Laraine Rendall, and other finalists and Award recipients.

With special thanks to the major sponsors, Kleenheat AutoGas, Radio 6PR, Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the Burswood Entertainment Complex (and all other sponsors and supporters) this Awards event and Cabbie Day festivities were able to be hosted free of charge for all drivers and their families.

This event and the Awards program went a long way in raising the recognition for taxi drivers.





## Conclusion

Throughout a difficult and uncertain year, the Taxi Council starved out threats of unfair competition and managed to absorb an increased number of taxi licences without adversely affecting operator and industry viability. Demand for taxis increased throughout this period and the Council managed to maintain levels of stability, plate prices and confidence in the industry.

The challenge, as in the previous year, has been to continue to work with the Government and progress initiatives that will improve the service to the community and returns to drivers and taxi operators. Pivotal to this, is the need for Government to provide the taxi industry with clear policies and economic certainty.

On behalf of the Executive Council, sincere thanks are extended to all members for their support, contributions and high level of involvement and participation during the year. Our gratitude also extends to industry partners and alliances and to State and Territory Associations and the ATIA for all the support and valued sharing of knowledge and experiences.

It has been a pleasure to work together during 2005 and progress issues of National importance.

**KEVIN FOLEY**  
**CHAIRMAN**

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## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Taxi Industry Task Force

A Taxi Industry Task Force was established following the Ministerial Inquiry into the NSW Taxi Industry launched by Minister Costa in 2004. The NSW Taxi Council, the NSW Taxi Industry Association and the NSW Country Taxi Operators' Association were each represented on the Taskforce which met regularly throughout the year. Our representation on this Task Force was one of the most important roles that the Association undertook during the last twelve months. Some other representatives on the Task Force were certainly very keen to introduce significant changes which would have had some dramatic effects. Whilst the final outcomes are not yet known, I have no doubt that without our forceful representations the outcomes from the Task Force could have been quite disastrous for our industry.

### Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Taskforce

Through the Taxi Council, the NSW TIA was also represented on the wheelchair taxi taskforce. Consultant Professor Ross McDonald forwarded his final recommendations to the chairman, Mr. Barry Unsworth after the end of the financial year. I am confident that the input from the taxi industry will result in increased benefits to both our industry and our WAT passengers. Confidentiality agreements forbid the release of any further specifics regarding either of these task force committees until the Minister releases final reports for publication.

### Industrial Relations

It was a very active year for the Association in the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC). The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) lodged an application for bailor taxi operators covered by the Contract Determination to pay superannuation on behalf of taxi drivers. The application was vigorously opposed by the NSWTIA. At the same time the Association filed an application for driver's entitlements in the Contract Determination (such as holiday pay and, if awarded, superannuation) to be calculated on the driver's actual earnings instead of a notional figure set by the IRC. The proposal required drivers to provide information from their Business Activity Statements to verify their earnings. Both the TWU's and the NSWTIA's applications were successful. However the TWU lodged an appeal against the decision on the calculation of entitlements. The Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission ultimately did not grant leave for the appeal to be heard. Whilst the IRC decisions have been made, the final orders to specify the changes to the Contract Determination have not been approved at this stage.

Another NSWTIA application to vary the Contract Determination to increase the maximum allowable pay-ins to allow operators to obtain their fair share of the 2005 increase in taxi fares was initially opposed by the TWU but was granted by consent in the end. The cost to the Association of legal representation for these cases has not been insignificant.

The NSWTIA Board endorsed the Taxi Council's application for registration as a separate industrial organisation of employers to enable it to represent the industry in industrial matters that affect taxi networks. Despite an objection filed by the TWU, the



application was successful, so the NSW Taxi Council is now also able to act in industrial matters that can ultimately provide benefits for the whole industry.

During the year the NSWTIA made representations to many political representatives and departmental officials as well as written submissions regarding the Commonwealth Government's proposed Independent Contractors Act. The proposed legislation has significant potential to change the way in which industrial relations laws affect taxi operators and bailee taxi drivers in Sydney and potentially other parts of New South Wales. The NSWTIA also provided significant input to the submission lodged by the ATIA on this matter that has the potential to protect the industry Australia-wide from governments that might be tempted to follow New South Wales in using industrial relations laws to govern contracts of bailment and so dictate the terms of the relationship between bailee drivers and bailor operators. Our experience clearly shows that taxi operators are the ones who bear all the costs when it comes to industrial relations matters so the ATIA would do well to keep abreast of this issue.

### **Authorised Taxi Inspection Stations**

In an increased effort to ensure the industry's standards are properly maintained, the NSW Taxi Council now conducts audits of A.T.I.S. sites. The audit program has been successful in identifying potential problem areas and in ensuring that all inspections are carried out to the required standard. Following the second round of audits the Ministry of Transport moved to suspend one site's authority for failing to address problems identified during the first round of audits.

In response to a request from the Taxi Council, the Ministry of Transport has made changes to the inspection standards so A.T.I.S. inspectors who inspect W.A.T's vehicles must now ensure that they have all of the necessary ancillary equipment. i.e. tie downs, belts, seat belts etc. Inspectors are required to issue Non-Compliance-Notices to operators whose vehicles do not comply.

### **Taxi Fares**

The 2005 fare increase was approved to commence on 11/07/2005. The 2.87% increase in urban fares was slightly above the C.P.I. for the same period and in line with the increase justified by the NSW Taxi Council and presented in its submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

### **Pick-up and Set Down Locations**

The NSW Taxi Council has been involved in ongoing discussions with the R.T.A, Sydney City Council and various other local councils to secure more pick-up and set down spaces for taxis. Discussions are looking positive but progress remains frustratingly slow. Our efforts continue to be hampered by taxi drivers who abuse taxi ranks by queuing into illegal areas and into traffic lanes. The reaction from local councils in these circumstances is often to simply to remove the rank entirely and start issuing infringement notices to drivers who stop.



A Taxi Access Working Party chaired by the Roads and Traffic Authority has been established to suggest some solutions including: allowing taxis to stop to set-down and pick-up in mail zones, extend an exemption throughout NSW for taxis to stop to pick-up and set-down in "no stopping" zones that only apply for specified periods of time, address issues of access for particular key locations, allow access for taxis to the "Bus Only" lane on the M2 Motorway and other matters.



## **Occupational Health & Safety**

Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) remains a large part of everyday taxi operation. We continue to print information regularly in the Taxi & Meter magazines as ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. We have also established and distributed protocols that explain how OHS matters should be dealt with. This provides a very useful tool to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic intervention. In addition, the NSW Taxi Council has recently developed a risk management brochure that has been issued to all our members. New regulatory powers mean that the WorkCover Authority in NSW can now force employers to stop work in their business if they cannot produce evidence of a current workers compensation policy.

There are significant changes underway to the way that Workers Compensation Insurance operates in NSW with the funds management operation returning to direct government control under a single fund and policy and claims management being tendered to seven individual agencies. Further changes to the way that premiums are calculated mean that there will be a period of adjustment required to bed down new systems over the next couple of years.

## **Taxi Advisory Committee**

The Taxi Advisory Committee has not yet been reinstated since the conclusion of the Inquiry and Task Force processes, however some funds were made available from the pool of funds collected by the government from taxi operator accreditation fees to provide security personnel for a trial of secure ranks in Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Manly during the lead up to New Year. The trial has been well received and we will be seeking ongoing funding to make similar services available during peak times of the year in locations that have such a need.

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## VICTORIA

### Fare Review

In the later part of 2003, the Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) flagged that fares should be increased by 12%. This position was rejected by the Government and even by some industry participants, despite fares having not being adjusted since December 2000 and CPI having increased by some 12%.

Over time there were discussions with Government and others, and for a time there was consideration given to a 7% increase. Finally, on 9 March 2005 the Minister for Transport referred the matter to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) for review and recommendations. The ESC issued a discussion paper in April.

The VTA responded to the issues paper on 3 May 2005 with a very comprehensive submission that called for a 23.43% increase and annual increases into the future based on 60% movements in Average Weekly Earnings and 40% CPI. This submission was prepared with input from a taxi operator reference group comprising of taxi operators from across the State.

In June 2005, the ESC released its draft report, which amongst other things, proposed that fares be increased in accordance with a CPI-X model and that X be 1%. This resulted in a proposed 8% increase with annual increases in 2006 and 2007 in accordance with the CPI-1 model.

The VTA responded with a further comprehensive submission arguing that the CPI-X model was not appropriate for an industry that is so labour intensive. The VTA submission did acknowledge that the movement in Average Weekly Earnings might not be the appropriate index and that the Wage Price Index could be more appropriate. This change certainly had precedence as this index is used by NSW and ACT in setting taxi fares. The VTA bid was consequently reduced from 24.34% to 14.43%.

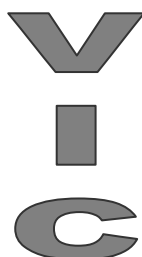
The VTA also made a submission directly to the Minister for Transport on 18 July 2005.

However, the ESC maintained its preference for the CPI-1 model and recommended this to the Minister. The Minister adopted this recommendation and announced the 8% increase on 1 August 2005.

The VTA publicly stated through the media and other means that the increase of only 8% was an insult to taxi operators and taxi drivers. This remains the opinion of the VTA.

It also remains the view of the VTA that increases in 2006 and 2007 must be based on at least 60% movement in the Wage Price index and 40% movement in CPI.

The VTA did support a number of ESC recommendations, including a review of the MPTP, a review of country taxi operations, and the VTD implementing a taxi operations data collection and analysis program as input into taxi planning and fare review processes.



## Country Taxi Review

In announcing the result of the taxi fare review on 1 August 2005, the Minister also announced a review of country taxi operations.

Coincidentally, the VTA had organised a mass meeting of country taxi operators to be held at Flemington Racecourse on 3 August. Over 180 taxi operators from across country Victoria met to express their concerns, issues and solutions to government representatives.

The Government was represented by the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Director of Public Transport and the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) Director.

Attendees at the meeting clearly made their views known. Country taxi operators need:

- A fare regime that reflects the operation and viability of country taxi operations
- Removal of the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP) cap
- Financial assistance to purchase wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) vehicles
- Contraction of Community Transport and the transfer of this work to taxis
- Financial assistance to depots to administer M50 bookings

The government representatives acknowledged the views of the meeting as being useful input to the announced review of country taxi operations.

On 22 August 2005, the Government announced the review of Victoria's country taxi industry was underway. The Acting Minister for Transport said at the time that the Government recently committed to finding ways to promote the long-term viability of Victoria's country taxis. He also said that it is clear that the country taxi industry is facing different challenges than those of metropolitan Melbourne.

The Terms of Reference of the review were encouraging:

"The key focus of the review is to:

- a. Investigate and assess the financial viability of taxi services in small country town environments;
- b. Investigate and assess the costs and financial returns associated with the delivery of services to people requiring wheelchair accessible taxis in regional Victoria, with particular emphasis on small country towns; and
- c. Recommend measures to improve outcomes for providers of those services and the communities they serve and to optimise the role of taxis in regional areas.

The review will make recommendations on options to assist taxi operators who are identified as suffering financial hardship including, but not limited to:

- Span of operating hours;
- Country taxi fare structures;
- Wheelchair accessible taxi procurement arrangements and operations, including vehicle types, replacement schedules and financing arrangements;
- Opportunities for taxi service providers to earn ancillary income by meeting wider transport needs in the communities they serve;
- Licence fees."

The review has taken longer than envisaged, but the VTA held the view that it should be done thoroughly and cover all the issues raised by country taxi operators and stakeholder user groups.



It is hoped that the review will be completed and the recommendations known by the end of March.

### **Competition Policy**

Flowing from the Government's NCPR announcement in May 2002, a number of outcomes have been implemented. These include the progressive release of 600 peak service licences over six years, a new driver training program (1 July 2003), taxi operator training (February 2003), and the release of the Customer Charter.

A significant amount of VTA resource was applied to the BSX taxi licence transfer and assignment system, and the accreditation regimes for drivers, operators, licence holders, depots and secondary networks.

Currently, these two outcomes have or are in the process of being implemented.

### **Multipurpose Taxi Program**

Announcement of the \$550 subsidy cap on MPTP members created anger and fear amongst most program members. After extensive lobbying by disability groups, the applicability of the cap was wound back to provide exemption for more members.

Nonetheless, the cap when introduced on 1 July 2004, applied to many members who because of age, frailness, health and transport isolation were caught in the net of reduced travel ability.

It was gratifying that many VTA country members went out of their way to assist their customers to apply for an extended cap because of their circumstances and because of the confusing and complex information required.

On 1 August 2005, the Government announced that the cap would be increased to \$1000 from 10 September 2005. This decision was a significant step to allay the fears of many MPTP taxi users.

### **Government Funded Community Transport**

It is pleasing that many VTA members have become involved with their local community transport groups via the Local Government structure.

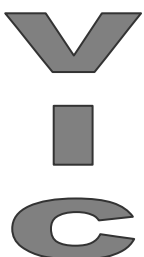
There is a strong thrust for Local Government to operate as transport service brokers rather than an operator of vehicles. Where implemented, this form of structure is proving successful by reducing service operating costs whilst increasing work for taxis.

### **WAT Operations**

A major concern for VTA members across the State is the viability of operating wheelchair accessible taxis (WAT).

The VTA presented two proposals to Government to assist country WAT operations, these being:

- the provision of a subsidy to assist in the purchase of WATs; and
- extension of the Metropolitan Taxi Zone assistance payments for the taking and dispatching of M50 bookings and driver incentive to travel to M50 pick up.



Indications are that some country WAT operators will not be in a position to replace their WAT when the life of the current vehicle expires. This matter was incorporated into the country taxi review.

### **Driver Recruitment**

The VTA maintained strong links with Job Service Providers, universities and TAFEs throughout the year. Many students were “Job Funded”.

### **Melbourne Taxi Driver Ambassador Program**

This free, two and half hour program comprises of six (6) important elements. The program equips customer service and tourism focussed taxi drivers with the skills and knowledge to excel in the delivery of customer service and in the promotion of Melbourne tourism services.

- Tourism and the Taxi Industry
- City of Melbourne Tourism Services
- Events and Conventions
- Image and Reputation
- Precincts, attractions and places of interest
- Role plays of typical scenarios

### **Marketing Business Development**

The main objective is to build additional market share (patronage) for the taxi industry as a whole. The main projects and activities undertaken over the last 12 months to progress this objective have broadly fallen into two main categories:

- Business Development strategy and projects
- Communication strategy and projects

### **Business Development**

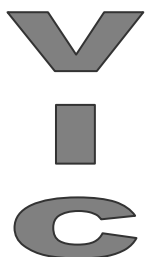
The objective is to increase business opportunities for taxi services, particularly as part of Government programs. Generally these have focused around strategic transport projects including community transport and other business programs. Examples of such Business Development activities are:

#### *TravelSmart Program*

This is a joint Government (Local, State and Federal) supported program by the Departments of Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainability and the Australian Greenhouse Office. The objective of TravelSmart is to assist in creating less car traffic on the roads, less pollution and greenhouse gases, stronger local economies and improved community safety.

The Program endeavours to influence people’s behaviour towards using alternative forms of transport to a car, such as cycling, walking or catching public transport including using taxi services.

In 2004 the TravelSmart Communities program ran a large scale demonstration project in the City of Darebin where over 27,000 households were contacted. In this program, of the households who requested travel information, over 60 percent of households requested information on taxis.





In 2005, over 45,000 households across two municipalities of Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley were invited to participate in TravelSmart.

This TravelSmart Community project is to date the largest multi-modal travel behaviour change program in the world.

#### *Transport Connections Program*

The nine grants for the Transport Connections Program announced in July 2003, are now well through their three-year period. The focus is on rural areas.

The aim of the projects is to achieve Transport Connections objectives by establishing links between the community transport sector and the public transport sector including bus, train and taxi services. In particular they aim to maximise opportunities:

- for greater utilisation and sharing of resources
- for brokerage of services for specific needs
- to encourage the development of demand responsive community transport models to address broader transport needs
- to facilitate arrangements between groups in the community needing transport or access, transport providers and where appropriate local business operators.

The VTA and its members have been taking an active role in increasing the profile of taxi services by communicating with individual project coordinators, being involved in various committees and participating in workshops and trials specifically about taxi services.

#### *Strategic Transport Planning*

The VTA is involved in a number of strategic transport planning forums where examination occurs on opportunities at State and Local Government levels where taxi services can make a contribution to the total future transport mobility options.

#### *The Victorian Road Based Public Transport Advisory Council*

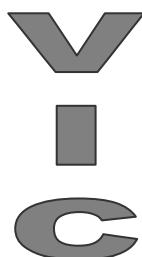
The VTA represents the Victorian Taxi Industry on this Ministerial council. The council provides a broadly based forum for obtaining views and advice from the transport sector on issues affecting the effective integration of the needs of road based public transport and the management of the road and traffic system in Victoria.

Its role is to provide advice to the Minister for Transport on the needs of public transport in the development, planning, programming, regulation, management, operation and design of the road and traffic network in Victoria with particular reference to:

- State Government strategies for planning and transport
- Road transport efficiency and road safety
- Community and environmental issues
- Service performance standards for road based public transport
- International best practice for road management and the public transport that uses them.

#### *Melbourne Transport Committee*

The transport task for the City of Melbourne is constantly evolving as trends in residential growth, employment growth, visitations to major events and personal travel patterns including worker commuting, all influence the way in which the City of Melbourne functions.





The City of Melbourne's Melbourne Transport Committee, of which the VTA is a member, addresses key transport issues. An emerging issue is the increasing tension between passenger and freight transport, and the tussle for access to road space and rail infrastructure. A number of Transport Issues Papers have been developed, including taxis, with the aim to explain, consider and seek input from the community on these issues.

## Communication

To further penetrate the market a new customer brochure and flyer was developed to promote an increased use of taxi services. This collateral has been used as part of the metropolitan TravelSmart program, at the Federation Square Tourist Information Booth, and the regional Transport Connection programs, along with Local Governments and Government Departments and other major business organisations and alliances.

The information in the brochure is of a general nature about taxi services, but highlights:

- Good reasons for using a taxi service
- The benefits of using a taxi service
- Special services offered by taxis
- The working behind the scenes
- General information including booking, feedback numbers

## Event Planning

The VTA continued its representation on key event transport planning and operational committees, including MCG special events, Australian F1 Grand Prix, Australian Tennis Open, Melbourne Safe City, Caulfield and Flemington Spring Racing Carnivals, and the Commonwealth Games.

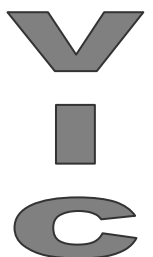
The VTA provided advice to venue operators on the operation of taxis and the placement of taxi ranks. This is in line with the VTA's greatly expanded role and participation in matters of land use and special event and venue planning, and assists in bringing taxi services to the public.

The VTA arranged for taxi rank supervision at the Caulfield and Flemington Spring Racing carnivals and the Australian Tennis Open.

## Infrastructure Transport Planning

The VTA had and continues to have significant involvement in:

- Taxi ranks location and traffic operations for the Commonwealth Games
- The redevelopment of Spencer Street Station
- Several developments within the Docklands precinct
- The redevelopment of the MCG
- The development and rebuilding of access to, and internal road systems of, Flemington Racecourse
- The redevelopment of Chadstone Shopping Centre and Ringwood Town Centre
- Reconstruction and redevelopment projects within the Melbourne CBD
- Smaller scale, but prolific, development and redevelopment issues at local council levels.





The VTA continues to be consulted by Councils, throughout Victoria and the Melbourne CBD, on taxi rank siting and design.

### **VTA WEBSITE – [www.victaxi.com.au](http://www.victaxi.com.au)**

The VTA revamped website now enjoys more hits than ever before. It offers all the latest industry breaking news, media releases and training information, and stores all the latest VTA and Taxi Industry Training Victoria\* (TITV) publications, available for download in PDF format.

The website offers users the opportunity to express their views on a number of topical matters, via the message forum, and online surveys.

*(\* Wholly owned subsidiary of the VTA)*

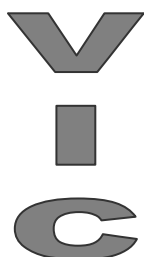
### **Government**

A good working relationship was maintained with the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Carlo Carli MP. The appointment of Jim Betts to the position of Director of Public Transport, and Stuart Shearer to the position of Director VTTD has created an important opportunity for the VTA to re-establish a sound and forward looking relationship.

### **The Year Ahead**

There will be a spill over of many key issues and programs from 2005, including:

- Country taxi review
  - Tolling systems
  - Accreditation of drivers, operators, licence holders, depots and secondary networks
  - BSX licence transfer and assignment system
  - DDA Standards and WAT operations
  - Review of the Transport Act
  - Review of the VTA structure
- 



## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

### Introduction

The biggest single event for the Canberra taxi industry in 2005 was the decision by members of Aerial Taxi Cabs Co-operative Society Limited to change the structure of their organisation from a co-operative to a company, Aerial Consolidated Transport Limited.

Other initiatives and matters that occupied the attention of the Canberra taxi industry were as follows:

- The establishment of internal competition within the Canberra taxi fleet
- The addition of shuttle buses to assist peak time services
- Service delivery to the Canberra International Airport
- The installation of a new booking system
- Workers compensation insurance
- WAT service
- Driver training
- A new fare structure
- Future licence releases

### Aerial Consolidated Transport Limited

Aerial Taxi Cabs Co-operative Society Limited was formed in 1959 after a group originally consisting of seven taxi owner/drivers broke away (in 1957) from a poorly disciplined organisation in search of "something better".

The co-operative thrived and in a few years was the only taxi group in Canberra. The co-operative structure worked extremely well as long as owners/drivers controlled the operation of a majority of Canberra's taxis.

During the past few years, the percentage of owner/drivers has dropped to a little over thirty percent. Many of the owners live interstate and have little or no interest in day to day running of the business and most of the operators have had no say in the running of the co-op which was responsible for the delivery of most of their business, or the Canberra Taxi Proprietors' Association which represented their interests in dealings with the government.

The decreasing percentage of involved and interested owners meant that the pool of potential directors was shrinking and the future under the co-operative structure would be much less certain.

In September members voted overwhelmingly to change from a co-operative to a public company.

Once this happened and for no apparent reason, the value of taxi licences rose considerably.

Shares in the co-op (fifty seven) previously attached to taxi owners only, and valued at \$2 each, became tradeable assets whose value was based on the asset backing of the company.



The company, which now dispatches work through three Canberra fleets [see below], communicates with operators through fleet operator committees.

The fleet operator committees provide members for the Aerial Operators Committee which deals with, among other things, disciplinary matters, and will provide two board members for the CTPA.

The new structure is set to provide a win/win situation for all involved.

### **New Fleets**

ACT taxi operators now have a choice of three fleets in which to operate their taxis.

The first is the Silver Service fleet which consists of Statesman and Fairlane sedans and operates similarly to Silver Service and Executive fleets in other jurisdictions. Bookings for Silver Service taxis incur an \$11 surcharge, and advance bookings are guaranteed to be on time.

The second fleet is the Elite Taxi fleet and now consists of over forty vehicles. The vehicles in the Elite fleet are generally lower aged vehicles. The livery on these vehicles is much more sedate than that found on most taxis and drivers' uniforms are of a higher standard than the minimum eg shorts are not permitted.

The operators of vehicles in the above two fleets are contracted to Aerial and drivers of those vehicles are obliged to give preference to customers who ring their number.

The third fleet is the standard Canberra Cabs fleet. Cars and drivers in this fleet must still meet minimum standards of appearance and performance.

Each fleet receives trip offers for work booked through its number or the number of a fleet below it, but not above it.

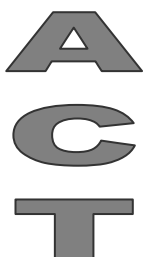
[There is provision for a fourth fleet, the Generic Fleet. This fleet will be allocated its own telephone number and will be open to operators whose vehicles fail to meet basic standards of presentation. Such a fleet will receive trip offers only for work coming through its own phone number. So far no-one has applied to join the generic fleet or allowed their vehicles to reach the required standard].

The idea is to create keen internal competition within the total Canberra taxi fleet and it is being generally well received by the public. Strong brand loyalties are already emerging.

### **Shuttle Buses**

The Canberra taxi industry has long been plagued by very sharp peak periods; particularly when Federal Parliament is sitting, and has often found it difficult to service certain areas of the city. This has led to criticism from parliamentary staff who all want a taxi in the same area at the same time and hoteliers whose clients are left waiting for long periods in their foyers.

In an attempt to overcome this problem, Aerial has purchased a fleet of five Toyota Hi-Ace shuttle buses. During peak periods the shuttles aim to do set runs every thirty minutes in areas which have been historically very difficult to service. Passengers are encouraged to book well in advance for this service.



The service commenced in October and has so far been very well received by passengers and hotel managers.

To make income between peaks, the buses are used for charter work, and although the service has been operating for only a short time, there has been a steady build-up of work.

One location at which the shuttles could be of great assistance to the travelling public and to the taxi industry is the Canberra Airport. Unfortunately, pre-booked charter work is the only type of work Aerial's shuttles are permitted to do at the moment as the Airport is contracted to another bus operator for Airport shuttle work.

### **Airport Service**

The Canberra taxi industry has long enjoyed a good reputation for the manner in which it moves people from the Canberra Airport. This was helped by the provision of good commissionaires and the ability to summon a large number of cars in a short time.

Unfortunately, circumstances have conspired to damage that reputation during the past year. They include:

- The building of a large number of office blocks on airport land which have generated extra traffic.
- An increase in the amount of traffic between Queanbeyan and Canberra (passing the airport)
- Poor road design in the vicinity of the airport
- An increase in airport passenger numbers

Being able to make better use of Aerial shuttle buses should help alleviate the problem to a small extent, but unless the road system is improved, things can only get worse.

The airport owner has a lot of influence in Canberra, but extracting money for road improvements from an embarrassingly cash-strapped ACT Government is going to be quite a challenge. That is, assuming he shares the same view as the taxi industry on the source of the problem.

### **Solidus**

Another important change on the way for taxi services in Canberra is the change in call-taking facilities.

A new Ericsson telephone system was installed in the call centre and it has been linked to the Solidus eCare ASR (automated speech recognition) booking system. The system was installed in July and has been undergoing thorough testing and preparation for complete utilisation early in 2006.

It is expected that eventually up to fifty-five percent of all taxi bookings will be received through the Solidus system.

When fully operational the system will be capable of receiving bookings through SMS, email, the web, and interpretative text.



## Workers Compensation Insurance

The cost of workers compensation insurance has long been a matter of concern for taxi operators, who have felt they were victims of an escalating price spiral about which nothing could be done.

During 2005, many of Canberra's taxi operators joined a group scheme arranged by Vero Insurance with the expectancy of making considerable savings on premiums.

Eventually, premiums are expected to be around 3% of wages compared with other quotes ranging from 4.5% to 5.2%, all well down on the 7% to 8% previously paid by individuals.

## WAT's

Service to people with disabilities has continued to fall below what passengers, the taxi industry and the Department of Urban Services would like.

Since the previous report to the ATC, five more WAT licences have been surrendered, taking to twelve (from twenty six) the total number that have been surrendered by local operators. Two have since been re-issued to the original operators after the announcement of a scheme to micro-manage the fleet.

During the year an inquiry into WAT services was conducted by the Department of Urban Services and subsequently a list of thirty nine recommendations was presented to the Minister. He accepted the lot.

Among them was a recommendation that WAT work should be micro-managed.

Although Aerial has some reservations about the scheme it is prepared to co-operate fully to implement it.

The main problem from the industry's point of view is the failure of the government to properly compensate drivers for the unpaid time they spend as they perform their work and hence their reluctance to accept wheelchair work.

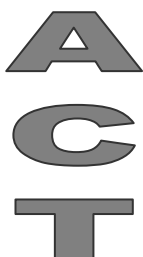
## Driver Training

Aerial has recently become accredited to provide taxi driver training in the ACT.

The emergence of competitive fleets associated with the company meant that drivers who had attended a generic course were required to undergo further instruction by Aerial staff to satisfy the company that they were trained to a satisfactory standard.

Having to virtually attend two courses meant that trainee drivers were paying more for their training than was necessary, although anecdotally it was demonstrated that the extra training made them more competent and better money takers.

The new Aerial course of five days includes one day of sight-seeing.





Early in 2006 Aerial will address the issue of driver shortages. The proposals being considered include:

- Advertising/recruitment campaigns
- Paying operators to provide on the job training (jockeying)
- Train now/pay later through contracted operators

Canberra enjoys the lowest employment rate in the country (around 3.3%), so attracting drivers is not going to be an easy task.

### **Changed Fare Structure**

After its annual review of Canberra's taxi fares, the ICRC granted an increase of 3.7% (effective July 1) and agreed to the request of the CTPA that the \$0.80 radio fee (booking fee) be dropped.

The CTPA felt that as the percentage of radio bookings had been dropping, drivers and operators were dropping income, and to have the radio fee absorbed by the distance rate would ensure a fairer return.

Also it was felt that the presence of the booking fee had not encouraged drivers to pay better attention to radio work in busy periods.

### **Future Licence Releases**

During the past year there has been an increase in taxi work and a large increase in the number of calls to Aerial's call centre.

The surrender of over one third of the WAT fleet has impacted on the passenger carrying capacity of the whole fleet, and there is therefore an expectation that extra licences are needed if only to replace the capacity lost due to the surrender of the WAT licences.

It has so far been impossible to determine the government's intentions regarding the release of future licences.

The CTPA has strongly recommended that future licences be obtained either at auction or through a tendering process based on the argument that people with equity to lose will be better persuaded to work effectively.

The question that arises when the addition of extra licences are being discussed is "where are the drivers to come from?"

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## QUEENSLAND

### Introduction

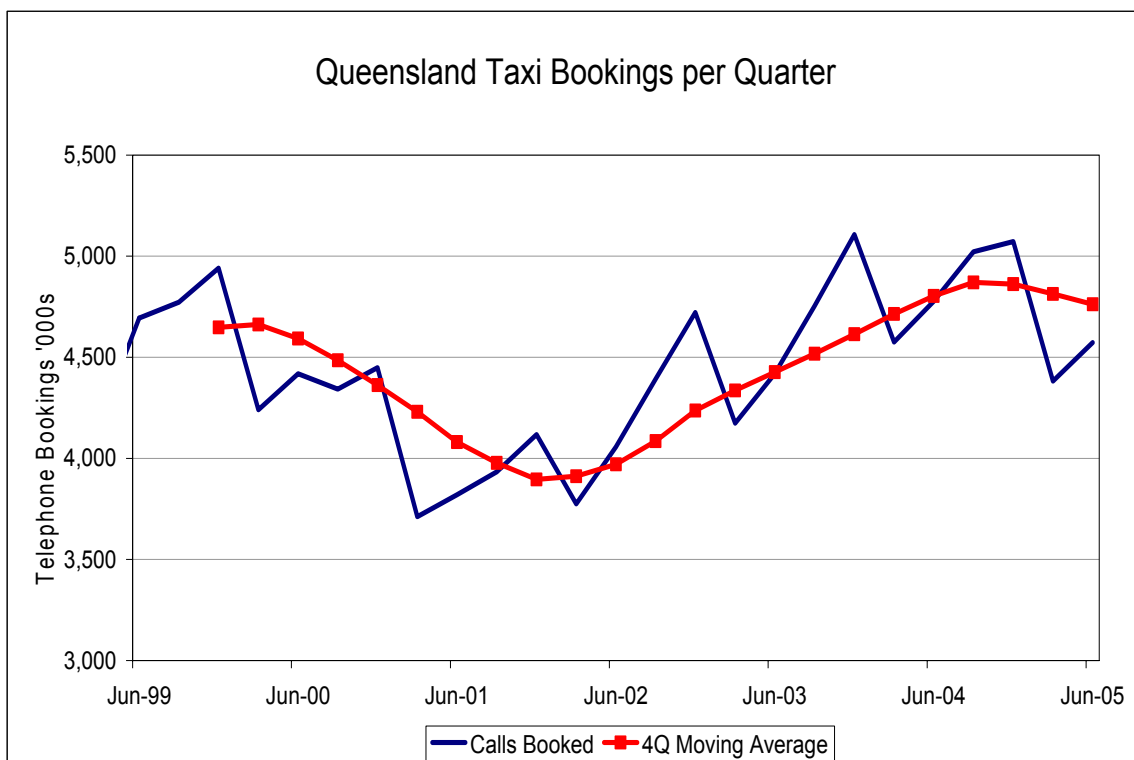
The 2005 calendar year saw some peaking in demand for taxi services in Queensland. Not surprisingly, servicing that demand, and sourcing drivers, were again major challenges facing the industry – especially in the context of the wider economy's buoyancy and record low levels for unemployment.

Of particular interest to the Taxi Council of Queensland (Taxi Council), some useful progress was made in regard to finalising the National Competition Reform (NCP) process and the development of the Government's Taxi Industry Code of Practice (CoP), including a "new" Standard Bailment Agreement (SBA). There was also a significant focus on a range of security issues including cameras in taxis and supervision at taxi ranks.

Once again, the Queensland Taxi Industry continued to deliver a world class product in terms of technological innovation, quality of service, value for money, and safety.

This report discusses the following strategic issues in turn –

- National Competition Policy;
- Industrial Relations;
- Taxi Industry Health & Safety Committee;
- Security Cameras;
- Accident Watch Task Force; and
- 2005 Taxi Fares Review.





## National Competition Policy

The National Competition Policy (NCP) Review of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act commenced in December 1998 and culminated in a report that was released in September 2000. Pleasingly, the report agreed with the Taxi Council's position that there was a substantial public benefit delivered to Queenslanders from regulating taxi services. Crucially though, it was not until August 2003 that the State Government committed to actioning the recommendations contained in the report.

That decision saw a marginal quickening of pace in what was otherwise an extraordinarily slow process. In late May 2004 then, Queensland Transport (QT) released a (short) discussion paper seeking public comment on how to implement the initiatives recommended in the 2000 NCP Review report. Worryingly, it contained a number of contentious elements including:

- the introduction of unlicensed public transport services in the form of "High Luxury Vehicles" and "Tours in Passenger Vehicles";
- a proposed, new hybrid limousine/taxi licence called a "Luxury Passenger Vehicle" licence;
- the possibility of QT manipulating taxi licence values through new powers to lease licences; and
- ambiguous proposals in regard to part-time taxis and the operation of contiguous taxi districts.

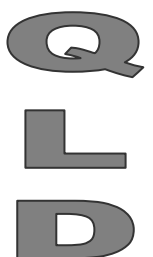
The Taxi Council responded by conducting an extensive number of workshops and briefing sessions across the State with members. From the feedback received we then compiled a comprehensive submission that was delivered to QT late August 2004. Following analysis of our submission and over 300 others, QT modified its position on a number of matters. Not all of these modifications were supported and accordingly the Taxi Council lodged a further NCP submission in December 2004.

During the course of 2005, little progress was made by the State Government either in terms of further development of policy or the implementation of policy reforms. Accordingly, the Taxi Council's position remains largely unchanged - we believe that most of the NCP related issues appear to have been satisfactorily resolved, although we are still concerned about aspects of the Government's intention(s) for the limousine industry. Lobbying for the best possible outcome across the whole NCP agenda will remain a high priority for the Taxi Council in 2006.

## Industrial Relations

Flowing from the NCP Review in 2000, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and the Minister for Industrial Relations set up a separate review of taxi drivers' remuneration and working conditions. This review produced a report (in September 2001) that included 20 recommendations.

The first 2 recommendations were of very significant concern to the Taxi Council – they proposed a radical change to the Industrial Relations Act that would give it and the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) coverage of taxi bailment agreements. In August 2002 the Government modified the recommendations to limit the role of the QIRC by establishing a Standard Bailment Agreement (SBA) and a Code of Practice (CoP) for the Taxi Industry.





From that date, virtually no substantive progress was made until the Taxi Council met with the then Minister for Industrial Relations, Hon Gordon Nuttall. In November and December 2003, we were able to successfully present advice from our solicitors (Clayton Utz) that articulated a pathway forward which satisfied both the Government's aspirations and the industry's concerns. Pleasingly, this proved to be a watershed in the development of a workable CoP and SBA.

Through the course of 2005, further work was undertaken on drafting and refining the CoP and SBA. By 30 June 2005, we believed they were both virtually finalised to the satisfaction of all interested and participating stakeholders. Disappointingly, it appears that in second half of 2005 there was some "behind closed doors" tampering of these documents by various bureaucrats seeking one last bite at the cherry to promote their particular ideological position. It will be important for the Taxi Council to follow through on this issue in 2006 and ensure that these last minute hiccups do not effectively erode what has been to date a "win-win" outcome for Government and the taxi industry.

### **Taxi Industry Health & Safety Committee**

Some 11 months after accepting the recommendation to do so (1 of the 20 noted above) the State Government established a Health & Safety Committee for the Taxi Industry in July 2002. The Council has actively supported, and participated in, this Committee ever since.

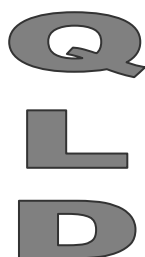
During 2005, the Committee reviewed taxi drivers' exemption from having to wear seatbelts. It accepted the Taxi Council's advice that taxi drivers should have a choice to wear, or not wear, their seatbelt when a passenger is in the vehicle. (NB Seatbelts can be a potential weapon used by offenders to restrain taxi drivers and prevent quick escape.) However, the Committee concluded that in the interests of reducing the risk for injury from crashes, taxi drivers should wear seatbelts when travelling without passengers in the vehicle.

It was disappointing to the Taxi Council that the Committee, a standing committee established on the direction of two minister of the Crown and a Cabinet resolution, met only twice during the whole of 2005. We believe that there is an ongoing need to review, and where possible, improve the health and safety of taxi operations and services in Queensland. Accordingly, we will be urging QT in 2006 to appropriately resource the Committee so that it can properly perform its role.

### **Security Cameras**

The Taxi Council continued its strong advocacy for the Government to mandate security cameras in taxis wherever it can be demonstrated that they will viably make a material improvement to the safe operation of a taxi workplace. In that context, the Council also advocated that (under such circumstances) the Government should fund the introduction of security cameras via an Industry Development Fund established from taxi licence sales revenue.

Pleasingly, the Government accepted the Taxi Council's representations, and agreed to purchase approximately 2,700 security cameras and then (freely) gift them to the industry. Much of the first half of 2005 was spent by the Government preparing for, and then conducting, a public tendering process for the supply of the cameras. Ultimately, this process resulted in the selection of VerifEye Australia as the sole, successful tenderer. The rollout of security camera systems in Queensland taxis subsequently commenced in October 2006 and is scheduled to be completed by September 2006.





### Accident Watch Taskforce (AWTF)

The Queensland Taxi Industry continued its commitment in 2005 to reducing crashes involving taxis. The AWTF in particular focussed on developing a safe driving culture across the whole industry through the following initiatives -

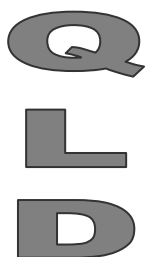
- training drivers in the Smith System for safe driving;
- facilitating safety workshops for operators;
- producing a range of safe driving fact sheets, posters, and other promotional material;
- sponsoring research at a doctorate level by CARRSQ;
- organising “breakfasts for cabbies” at Brisbane Airport and other promotional events.

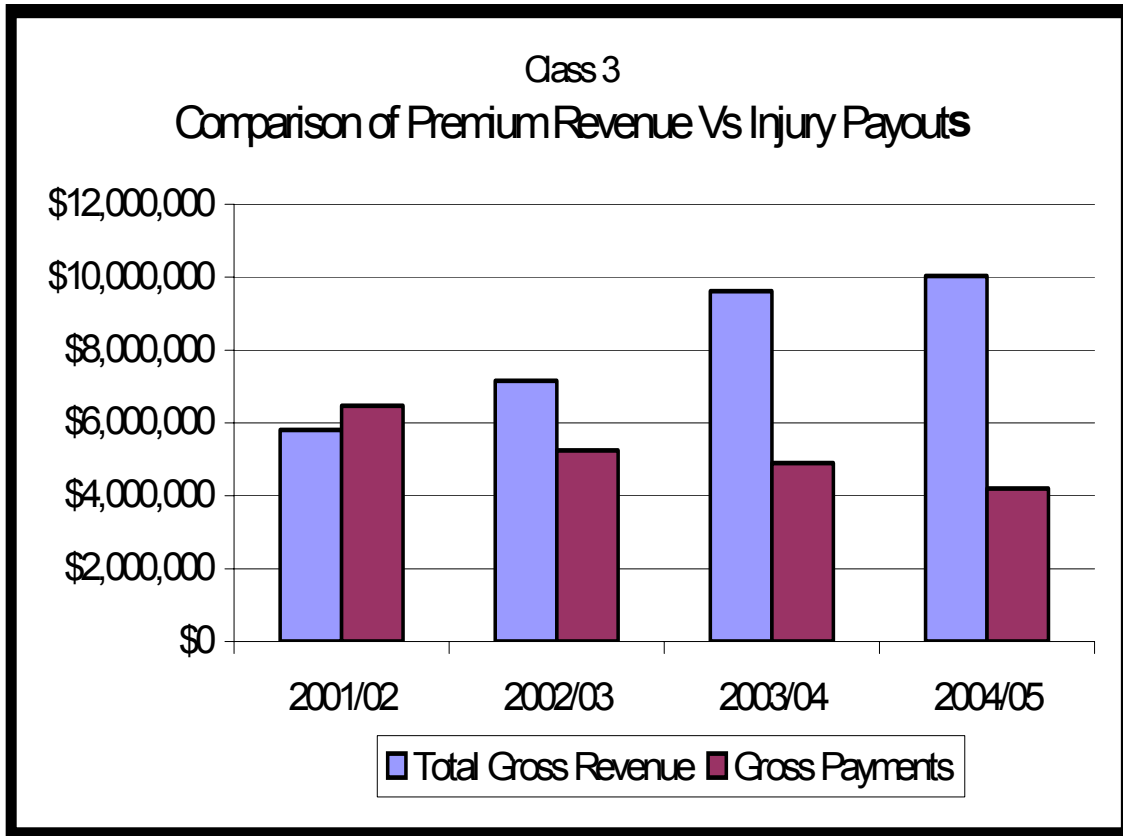
The Government’s tort law reforms (Personal Injuries Proceedings Act and Civil Liabilities Act) effectively complemented these AWTF initiatives. Their impact on reducing injury claims frequency was significant in 2005.

In its 2005 submission to the Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC), the Taxi Council not only discussed these points but also highlighted the huge financial burden that Queensland taxi operators, particularly those in rural centres, and taxi customers bear by comparison with other Australian states. This burden is not a consequence of Queensland taxi drivers having any higher propensity to have at-fault accidents - it is produced by unfortunate features inherent in the Queensland CTP system.

The statistical analysis presented in our submission demonstrated a clear and unequivocal “trend break” reduction in Queensland Class 3 (i.e. taxi related) CTP claims. Accordingly, the Taxi Council argued strongly that MAIC should give effect to statements by Federal and State Government Ministers calling for premium relief to be delivered by insurance providers.

We contended that the Queensland Taxi Industry had responded in the best possible manner to MAIC’s previous concerns about an apparent upward trend in Class 3 CTP claims frequency and size. Developing and sustaining a safe driving culture within the industry had been elevated to the highest priority. This industry wide commitment, together with the Government’s tort law reforms, had broken any previous upward trend, reversed it, and facilitated the plumbing of previously inconceivable lows for Class 3 CTP claims frequency and size statistics. Importantly, these results are demonstrably sustainable for 2005/06 and beyond.





In its submission, the Taxi Council challenged MAIC to acknowledge these good results, and their implications, through a responsible and measured reduction in the Class 3 CTP premium relativity (vis-à-vis Class 1).

Unfortunately, MAIC responded by increasing the Class 3 CTP premium relativity from 13 to 14 times the Class 1 premium (instead of 15 times as it originally intended prior to receiving the Taxi Council's submission). This amounted to an extra \$49.80 on the annual premium.

While a somewhat disappointing result from our perspective, it did serve to galvanise the Taxi Council into searching for a CTP insurer that was prepared to break ranks from its peers and take a realistic and informed approach to setting premiums for Queensland taxis. We sought to find an insurance company that would be prepared to recognise the new downward trends in crash and injury claim data and price its products accordingly. We began looking for an insurer prepared to explore the obvious benefits of doing business with our industry using a cooperative and positive approach. Pleasingly, with the help of the Taxi Industry (Aust) Insurance Brokers (TIAIB) we found such a CTP insurer in the QBE Insurance Group in September 2005.

The QBE Insurance Group agreed to join the AWTF as a fully participating member and to work in cooperation with the Taxi Council and our various partners on reducing Class 3 CTP premiums in Queensland.

To that end, QBE also agreed to "put its money where its mouth is" by filing its next Class 3 CTP premium (i.e. for the January-March 2006 quarter) at a lower rate than the ceiling established by MAIC. (NB To our knowledge, QBE has again filed a Class 3 CTP premium below the ceiling for the April-June 2006 quarter.)

Based on current trends in market share, unless one or more of the other 5 CTP insurers responds successfully to QBE's lead, we confidently expect QBE to become the



dominant provider of Class 3 CTP insurance by the commencement of the 2006 / 07 financial year.

The Taxi Council will continue to drive the work of the AWTF, and lobby MAIC and CTP insurers like QBE for lower CTP premiums as a major priority in 2005/06.

### **Fares Review**

The Taxi Council is always concerned about maintaining the viability of the industry for owners, operators and drivers. In that context, it is absolutely vital that taxi fares are set at levels sufficient to cover costs and provide reasonable incomes / returns for owners, operators and drivers, while at the same time remaining affordable for customers.

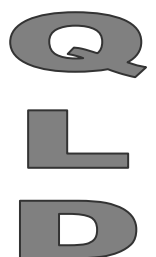
In our 2005 fare submission, the Taxi Council argued that the current arrangements for reviewing Queensland taxi fares had produced a range of disparate and inconsistent outcomes over the previous 5 years. Following a 26.8% increase in fares in 2000 (delivered via 3 fare rises in short succession), there were no increases in either 2001 or 2002, and only modest 3.2% and 3.3% fare increases respectively in 2004 and 2005.

Our 2005 submission therefore proposed a new and more statistically rigorous approach for determining Queensland's taxi fares. We presented QT with a multiple regression econometric model (Econometric Model) developed by the Taxi Council.

Accepting the Taxi Council's recommendations and the output of the Econometric Model, QT approved a fare increase in December 2005 of approximately 6.35% in average fares for South East Queensland. QT also approved an additional 8 c/km in the distance fee to apply in taxi districts outside of South East Queensland – recognising the extra costs associated with operating taxis in those areas.

As a final note, QT's planned review of its processes and models for setting Queensland taxi fare maximums did not occur in 2005. This was no particular surprise given the review has been repeatedly postponed since 2003. We have been advised that QT still plans to conduct a large scale review sometime in 2006. (notwithstanding its apparent acceptance in 2005 of the Taxi Council's new Econometric Model).

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## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Demand For Services

Bi-annual taxi industry studies conducted by the Transport Division of UniSA have previously revealed a downward trend in the demand for taxi services in the Adelaide metropolitan area. Since 1996 studies have an estimated 25% drop in taxi work. Anecdotal evidence during 2005 has pointed to a smoothing of the decline and we are hopeful that confidence will continue to grow. The Taxi Council channelled funding approved for the last scheduled industry study into a more comprehensive study, which will include an economic review. This will be completed during 2006.

### Government Services

The Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure has been realigned to focus better on the taxi industry. The Public Transport Division is responsible for taxi related policy and legislation, including fares (and the Taxi Cost Index) and the Safety and Regulation Division is responsible for accreditation licensing and registration (currently co-located with the Taxi Council at the One Stop Shop). Compliance, Standards and Investigation are also part of this Division but are located separately.

### Premier's Taxi Council

The Government established the Premier's Taxi Council in November 2002. It is chaired by the Premier and the Minister for Transport and includes representatives from all sectors of the taxi industry, together with a consumer and tourism representative. The Premier's Taxi Council gained authorisation for taxis to use bus lanes and for Access Taxis to use the reversible Bus Way at AAMI Stadium during AFL games. The expiation fee for illegal parking in taxi ranks has been increased from \$28 to \$70 at request of the industry through the Premier's Taxi Council. It is a high level and extremely valuable forum for raising important issues to Government.

### One Stop Shop

The first phase of a major venture between the industry and the government was the opening of the "One Stop Shop" in May 2005. The Taxi Council shares the same location as the Department of Transport Licensing and Accreditation Section with co-location providing an improved and streamlined service. Taxi Drivers and Operators are now able to obtain a consistent high standard of information and advice and conduct licensing, registration and accreditation business at the one location. The government also appointed a Taxi Liaison Manager to work closely with the industry on important matters. We were delighted that Mr Bill Gonis was selected to that position as he is from the industry and is well known and respected. A major One Stop Shop task to be undertaken this year is to enhance and update driver training, introduce refresher and tourism training, information brochures and examine operator training options.





## Taxi Rank Concierges

The Taxi Rank Concierge Scheme operated at some major events during 2005 and on weekends during December. The Taxi Rank Concierges, who worked in teams along with security staff covered Friday and Saturday nights from ten o'clock to six in the morning. They managed the late night demand at the main taxi ranks in the CBD and Glenelg, assisting local people and visitors to the city with getting taxis quickly and safely. The Taxi Council believes the scheme, which was jointly supported by the Government of SA, has proved to be a great success both for the industry and for passengers.

## Taxi Ranks

The Taxi Rank Sub-Committee is a very active portfolio. The number of taxi ranks is diminishing whilst competition for kerb space, especially in the Central Business Districts, is increasing. New building projects are approved without consideration given to taxi ranks or taxi drop off areas. The Taxi Rank Sub-Committee is working with the Public Transport Division and the Adelaide City and Local Councils to overcome problems with the shifting needs for taxi ranks.

## Training

There are currently two approved taxi driver training providers in Adelaide. The Taxi Council will be taking more of an active role in training in 2006. We will be looking for information on the number of drivers trained, those completing the course, the effectiveness of advertising for drivers. We will also be introducing refresher training and investigating Operator Training. The current course needs to be updated and "refreshed" to include more information in many of the modules. Information on issues such as carrying guide dogs and the relevant Disability and Discrimination Act will be expanded. The Taxi Council working in conjunction with Guide Dogs SA has produced a very useful and informative brochure outlining driver's obligations with regard to guide dogs. A number of topical brochures will be produced during the year for training and refresher training reference.

## Adelaide Airport

There was a great deal of talk and uncertainty with the opening date of the new airport terminal. The Taxi Council was invited to a preview of their plans for taxis. We were impressed with the location for taxis but had a few questions on some operational decisions made by Adelaide Airport Limited (AAL). AAL management considered feedback by some members of the industry and have developed a "short trip" return system and "no job" payback system. Taxis pay a \$2 service fee as they enter the layoff and AAL did not want drivers disadvantaged if they were required to leave the airport without a fare. We must also pass on our sincere thanks to the Adelaide Airport, as they were the major sponsor of the 2005 Taxi Driver of the Year Awards.

## Fare Increase

The Taxi Cost Index review is conducted annually and is calculated from changes in costs over the previous 12 months. Costs were calculated as having increased by 4.6% during 2004 and a fare rise was approved in July 2005. The taxi industry is satisfied with the methodology used to calculate and approve fare adjustments. We feel it reflects a fair and economic rationale for commencing discussions.





## Taxi Driver of the Year

A fabulous Gala Night was held in November to announce the winner of the 2005 Adelaide Airport Taxi Driver of the Year. Trevor Hendry, who was named Driver of the Year, won the first prize of \$10,000 and a \$1,000 Unigas LPG voucher. A number of smaller prizes of Accommodation and Overnight stays in major hotels were awarded to monthly winners. The hard working TDOY Committee also ran a silent auction with items donated by many industry sponsors. We were very grateful to all sponsors who embraced the awards again this year.

## Country Taxis

The 1994 Passenger Transport Act allowed for a number of prescribed Councils to control taxis via local by-laws but made no provision for country taxis in areas where there were no taxi by-laws. It also failed to create an accreditation category for country taxi operators or for country taxi drivers.

The then Passenger Transport Board dealt with this oversight by attempting to deem country taxis to be Small Passenger Vehicles "NV", thus creating a new set of problems. Under the Act SPV's are supposed to have "blue plates", only taxis are allowed to have taxi roof lights and taxi meters, and only taxis can call themselves taxis.

Country taxi operators, primarily through the Taxi Council, have been attempting to resolve these anomalies since the late nineties. Action by Country Taxi Operators has stepped up, since many country councils have withdrawn their taxi by-laws. A working party has now been established between the Local Government Association and the Public Transport Division, to work through and find solutions to these problems. In the meantime, the uncertainty impacts on industry confidence and in turn infrastructure investment decisions. We are expecting some decisions to be made during 2006.

In closing, 2004 was a positive year for the South Australian taxi industry. There will be challenges ahead but with the current co-operation between the industry and stakeholders, we are confident that we are geared up to meet those challenges. We wish everyone success during 2006, and particularly wish the WA Taxi Council success with the hosting of the 2006 conference.

We take this opportunity to invite everyone to the 2007 Conference in Adelaide; it is not to be missed!

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## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Introduction

The Board of Management has been extremely active over the past twelve months, and I am pleased to report on some of the highlights which are worthy of mention.

In March this year the decision was made to be part of the national body of the taxi industry, Australian Taxi Industry Association, and the Taxi Council NT paid a membership fee for every taxi in the Northern Territory at a cost of \$1544.40.

The Northern Territory was represented at the World Taxi Conference on the Gold Coast, and Vice President Steve Hall presented a paper relating to the advantages, and disadvantages of deregulation.

Information and exchange of ideas from all states with the national body's executive officer Mr. Blair Davies, and other interstate executive officers and committee members, is now happening on a regular basis, and is proving to be beneficial to all members.

### Driver Training

Driver training is a problem for all states and is proving to be of major concern for all operators in the Territory. The Council has made several submissions to the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Board, and is now well advanced in preparing a formal application to introduce an approved training program here in Darwin. Katherine already has an operator approved training facility with Casey Morgan, and Alice Springs Taxis is currently seeking approval for their area.

This should result in a more cost effective scheme aimed at encouraging more people into the industry, whilst improving the standard of drivers behind the wheel.

Experienced industry people teaching an approved course must result in better qualified drivers.

### Darwin City Ranks

Regular meetings were conducted with the Darwin City Council's Mr. Neil Dyer to discuss and implement changes and improvements to both CBD and suburban ranks.

Anti social behaviour on city ranks was one particular problem with most drivers reluctant to pick up fares outside city nightclubs and pubs.

Following meetings with the Northern Territory Police and the Australian Hotels Association, it was decided to make changes to positions of ranks in an effort to stop people roaming up and down Mitchell Street, and through the Mall. The cooperation of the Australian Hotels Association and the provision of security appear to have eased the problem.

A complete review of all suburban ranks was undertaken and as a direct result several changes have been implemented.





## Taxi Marshal Service

The Taxi Council has provided and paid for the services of taxi marshal at all major events and several regular minor events such as Mindil Markets. Several meetings were held with Darwin Turf Club management regarding services during the Cup Carnival, and whilst it's still not perfect, feed back was this year was an improvement.

Discussions with Sky City Casino with the aim of improving services at peak times have resulted in a new scheme where details and times of functions will be relayed to the industry.

However a new set of minimum standards for taxi marshals was introduced by the CPV Board which now requires a marshal to be found competent by a Registered Training Organisation in the following units.

1. Apply customer service skills (TDT 1297C)
2. Control crowds, or Monitor and control individual and crowd behaviour.
3. Control and direct traffic.

Further whilst not a requirement, it is desirable that such a person has at least two years experience in the NT taxi industry, to ensure awareness of local issues, and holds a current 'h' endorsement to ensure medical fitness, a satisfactory criminal history, and a knowledge of relevant Regulations. All this will mean further expense in employing the services of any taxi marshal in the future.

## Touting

Touting continues to be a hot topic and the Council has made several formal complaints to the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Board with mixed success. It appears some PH drivers continue to offend, despite receiving written notification of exactly what defines touting. The Taxi Council has resolved to implement a program which will provide some hard evidence in order to obtain convictions of those drivers who continue to go on breaking the law.

### COMMERCIAL VEHICLE NUMBERS IN NORTHERN TERRITORY CVL NUMBERS

AS ON 2 September 2005

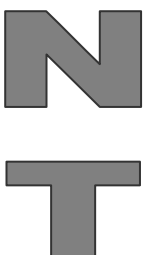
BY AREA AND CVL TYPE

Area	Taxi	MPT	Sub	MPS	Minibuses	PHC	Limo		SFV	Total
Darwin	104	12	10	2	23	10	9		-	181
Alice Springs	30	3	2	-	19	8	3		-	70
Katherine	11	1	-	-	1	1	1		-	20
Gove	3	1	-	-	8	-	-		-	12
Tennant Creek	3	-	-	-	1	-	-		-	4
Total	151	17	12	2	52	19	13		-	287

Note:

1. Percentage of the taxi fleet (excluding substitute taxis) that is wheelchair accessible:
 

NT	10.1%
Darwin	10.3%
Alice Springs	10.0%
2. Taxi and MPT numbers do not include licences on hold.



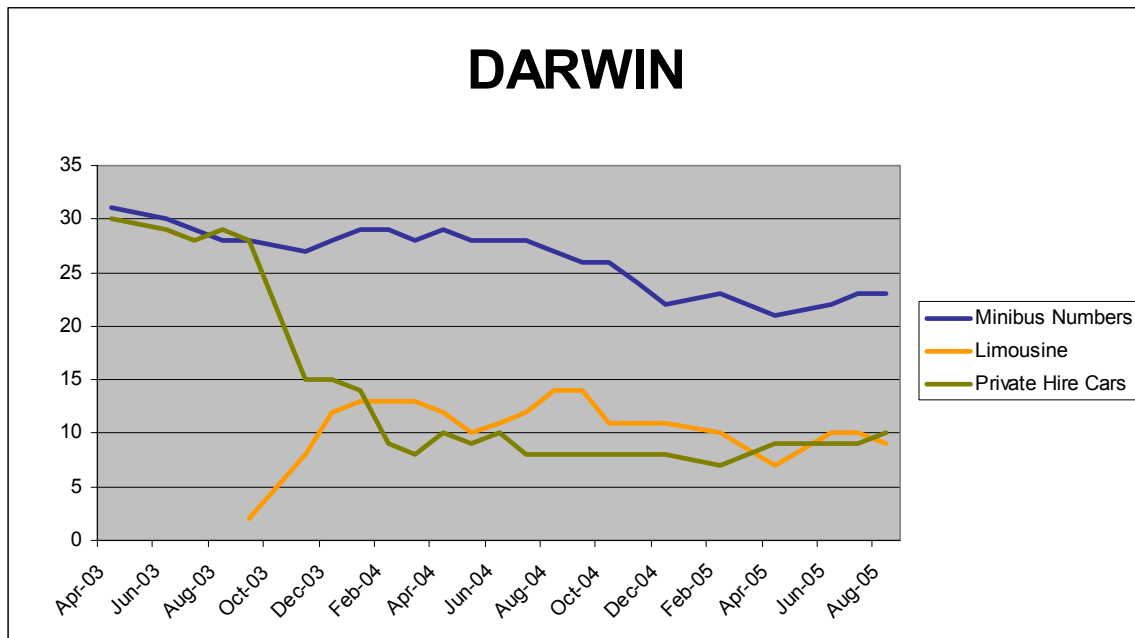
### Northern Territory Police

The Taxi Council continues to have a close relationship with our Northern Territory Police Force and meet on a regular basis. An example of this cooperation was the stamping out of the louts who staged a spate of rock throwing incidents earlier this year. Special squads of police were assigned to the problem and dedicated taxis were provided by Taxi Council members which resulted in a great result to eliminate the problem.

Cooperation is also provided to officers with the provision of information from various drivers helping police in their various enquiries.

### Commercial Passenger Vehicle Numbers

Whilst the number of taxi have remained relatively static it is interesting to note the trends of the other vehicles.



### Complaints Tribunal

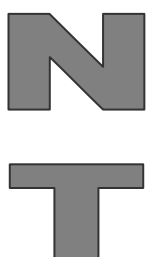
The Taxi Council has introduced a complaints tribunal consisting of any three board members to respond directly to passenger complaints received from the public on the Councils Hotline 1800 444 304.

All complaints received on this number are noted by the executive officer on a seven day a week basis, and appropriate actions taken according their severity.

The most common complaints received relate to smoking, rude behaviour, and dangerous driving. On the positive side the number of formal complaints is minimal.

### Fare Increases

The Taxi Council continues to be active in lobbying the NT Government regarding the setting of tariffs which will provide a sufficient return to enable the provision of a high standard of service to the general public. A fare increase in August was long overdue and we will continue to lobby for a continuous reaction to the ever increase in fixed costs.





An example of this was pressure for a fuel levy.

In an attempt to encourage more high occupancy vehicles onto the road a new tariff was introduced to the pre-booked carriage of six or more passengers in one vehicle. The high occupancy tariff is 50 per cent higher than a standard fare which is a saving for groups and a profit for the operator.

### **Multipurpose Taxis**

Problems in providing an adequate service to the regular users of these vehicles continue to be the subject of public discussion both in the print media and talk back radio.

Some twelve months ago a proposal was submitted to the government for a lift fee to help compensate the income of the operators of these vehicles. Unfortunately the CPV board rejected this on the grounds of discrimination, and now the problem has become a political football. The Transport Department, the Health Department, and Family and Community Services Departments are all involved and nobody wants to be responsible for the solution.

### **The Next Twelve Months**

Whilst the last twelve months has seen a much closer spirit of cooperation with all bodies involved in our industry as usual the hard work and long hours has been left to a few who must be complimented for their efforts.

To continue to be recognized as the voice of the industry it's essential each and every operator, and driver, provides a greater involvement. The greater the number of financial members the more effective the Taxi Council of NT (2001) will be, and the more powerful our ability to lobby the industry partners in providing a higher standard of service. Remember the taxi industry is required to provide a safe comfortable means of transport to the general public on a twenty four seven basis, three hundred and sixty five days a year.

I am pleased to report the Minister for Transport Dr. Chris Burns office has recently contacted our executive officer to arrange regular quarterly meetings with the new Board of Management of the Taxi Council of NT, aimed at keeping him informed and in touch with our industry.

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