

Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program

Miss Bernadette Cheesman

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

TAXI SUBMISSION

Bernadette Cheesman

30/9/2021

(NB: 'taxi' is used as the generic term for all taxi, ride-share, etc transport, unless otherwise specified.)

1. INDUSTRY REGULATION NB: This ties in with good governance, below.

There is an urgent need to regulate/re-regulate this 'industry.' The interests, safety and wellbeing of the passenger must remain paramount. Regulation includes everything from fares to vehicle safety.

2. Security:

Absolute minimum security and safety measures must be compulsory, monitored, inspected and enforced across every vehicle and driver in this aspect of the public transport sector. Security issues include, but are not limited to:

- (i) driver photo id, to be displayed for easy passenger verification;
- (ii) photo ID on passenger/users' MPTP card to assist with stopping fraudulent use;
- (iii) driver police checks;
- (iv) vehicle safety, roadworthiness, registration, maintenance, regulation and monitoring and enforcement of basic standards for vehicles may have to be addressed, as a matter of urgency. For example: lifting equipment to be properly installed, maintained and monitored; etc.
- (v) working security cameras and properly operating and papered receipt machines in all vehicles;
- (vi) driver basic training in disability awareness;
- (vii) if drivers are not required to keep and maintain fatigue log books, like truck drivers must, why not?
- (viii) minimum standard of behaviour expected of drivers:
 - . eg: giving change for a cash payment, without having to be asked. Remind drivers to give change, however small, but particularly for larger notes. Too many see it as a 'tip', rather than the passenger not having correct money.
 - . Drivers who require certificates for certain tasks/work must carry them at all times, or have them lodged with their booking office and available for inspection at any time. Recently, one driver did not have the relevant paperwork (to travel towards Melbourne from a regional area) with them. With the meter turned on, they started driving a very long way out of the actual requested fare route to collect it, charging the passenger for this diversion, until the passenger called a halt and phoned for another taxi.
 - . Feeling comfortable: - driver ID and fares properly displayed;
 - working seatbelts, etc.
 - signage relevant to disability: from easy English, through to braille/tactile signage, etc.
 - . There must be provision to continue paying with cash, if this is the preferred option for a passenger.
 - . With or without covid measures, taxis should be cleaned/tidied between passengers. Few people are comfortable sitting among, or alongside, previous passengers' rubbish.
 - . When a taxi/share ride is booked for a particular time, the company/provider must ensure a vehicle arrives, at the ordered time;
- (ix) proper and adequate insurance for all relevant parties; etc.

3. Maximum fare rate

This needs discussion, especially about ensuring access to everything from social events and appointments to study/employment etc, especially after the covid closure of so many rail services around Victoria (and

elsewhere??). Replacement coach services are often not feasible alternatives eg: for those with continence, mental health, balance and mobility issues, scooters, etc. For example, I have been told that the Melbourne-Ballarat route is classed as a 'short' trip, so buses/coaches don't need to be fitted with a toilet. The relevance to continence issues (either an issue in itself, or as a symptom/consequence of another medical/disability issue) should be obvious.

Re capping the fare, contribution to fare, or percentage paid: I realise it can't be a blank cheque, but there must be recognition of lack of access to services and alternatives in areas outside Melbourne, especially in circumstances, as outlined above. As noted above, buses/coaches are often not feasible alternatives for scooters, the physically disabled or the aged, etc. I need more time to consider how best to develop and implement this.

Fare rates should be standardised and metered across the taxi/ride share etc. transport spectrum.

4. Good governance: NB: This ties in with industry regulation, above.

(i) fares: to be metered and metered fares to be observed. For example: flagfall is supposed to be \$3.60 for normal business hours. Over the past 10 years, I think I have had this once, or twice. On all other occasions, flagfall began at \$4.80 and \$7.60, even \$12.00 one non-holiday Monday afternoon at 3pm.

(ii) I can only comment on one aspect of the Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) organisation, in particular, the complaints section.

(a) The CPVV complaints section urgently needs to be reviewed and restructured. [Question: does CPVV include complaints about rideshare, etc., or is it limited to registered taxis only?] From interaction earlier this year (2021) it is currently beyond a farce. After I sent in a written complaint and questions, a barely intelligible phone message was left. The only way I knew who it was from, was to dial an automatic return of the call. This took me through to CPVV reception. After discussion, reception decided I must need complaints, so put me through. I went through to voice mail and left a message. This occurred on several occasions over a few weeks. I used the 1800 return call number, that I had had confirmed as the number to use. Two messages were returned, leaving messages to contact the 1800 number. I did, continually being put through to voice mail. Even reception did not facilitate speaking with a person. A 24 hour, dedicated questions/complaints line to a human operator needs to be introduced.

(b) At the time of this interaction (early 2021), CPVV claimed they do not deal with fare disputes: this is the domain of Consumer Affairs (CA). This, too, is beyond ludicrous, as it splits responsibility from CPVV, complicating any negotiation, or resolution, process by introducing a completely different organisation and process(es).

CA is yet another organisation, with its own set of hurdles for participants to try to learn, become familiarised and attempt to negotiate. These issues, let alone any financial cost, render it largely prohibitive. It introduces an adversarial system, which does no one any good, especially the vulnerable. To repeat, it just provides yet another series of hurdles to negotiate and deal within another system/structure/set of rules. This is double burden is daunting and is often prohibitive, even without the above-mentioned financial costs factored in.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Bernadette