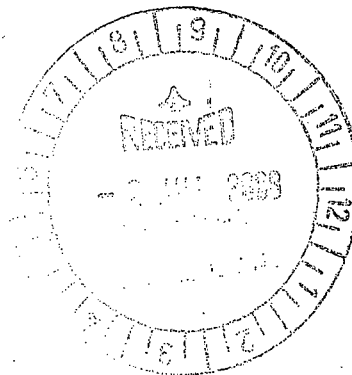


TAXI FARE REVIEW  
ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I will begin by introducing myself and my business partner. We are Julie and Brian Gammon. We have been owner, operator and full and part-time drivers for the past 30 or so years. We both consider ourselves to be knowledgeable in all areas of our industry. We have always had a great pride in our job and strived for customer satisfaction. We are after all involved with a service industry!

In our submission to the review points will be made on the following:

1. Driver attitude and education.
2. Bailment agreement/driver remuneration.
3. Public perception and confidence.
4. Better efficiency = increased revenue and customer satisfaction.

1. As we both still work our own cabs, I feel that we can give accurate reports on the state of things. Well, I can tell you that nothing much has changed over 30 years in terms of amount of work, remuneration and passenger attitude and satisfaction with our service. What has changed however, is the attitude to an unacceptable level of drivers about the amount of service they are willing to provide, their pride in their job, their cars and themselves, which leads to lower standards across the industry. I find it totally unacceptable that these people will also be complaining about the lack of money that they make. The only reason one cannot make a reasonable living in taxis is because you are either lazy or not educated correctly in the first place. It is not a case of sit on a city rank knocking back fares until you get the one to the airport and once there playing games until called through the ranks to pick up from Qantas or Virgin to go back again. Taxi company educators themselves are guilty of this behaviour when teaching brand new drivers how to get "the good jobs". Well, my friend, in this industry there is no such thing as one job better than the other as I will illustrate with just one of many examples such as this. I was sitting no.2 car on Rialto on Collins rank one very slow Sunday afternoon, and had been there for nearly two hours. A young woman with a large backpack approached the first car, opened the passenger side door and briefly spoke with the driver. She then closed the door and walked back towards my car. I stepped out to enquire what happened with the other driver when she informed me that she was only going to Southern Cross and that he would not take her as the fare was too short. So I smiled at her, loaded the pack and off we went for a \$3.80 fare. No sooner had she alighted with her pack, than another young woman approached with a suitcase and asked to be taken to the airport. It was a shame the trip didn't pass the Rialto as I may have been able to change at least one mind. So you see, there really is no such thing as a "good job" because you never know where your next one will lead. Perhaps examples like this should be used in the education package in order to encourage new drivers. We have a saying that "as long

as there is a bum on the seat and the meter is ticking over, that is a good job". And also, no matter how short the fare, the passenger has hired you because they need you, and you are after all out there to provide that service! All that the majority of passengers wish is that you provide their requested service in a professional and courteous manner. Not really that difficult to deliver on.

2. We have usually 8-9 drivers, some full time, some part time. Most have been with us for quite a while, many years. The noticeable difference in some drivers to others is that no matter how many or what shifts they work, they still work to a target. Therefore the only result in increasing fares, giving surcharges or other incentives made is that they will reach their target sooner during the shift, with less input, and on doing so will knock off and go home. Whether there is a correlation in this behaviour throughout the industry or not, it happens in our business and the main offender is the night driver. We can produce the records from the last two years or since the 20% surcharge to the driver came in, that will show that we have actually had a decrease in revenue from these shifts even though the driver still takes home the same as before albeit in a shorter period of time! The bailment agreement as it stands allows for the driver to take home 50% of his shift takings clear of cost or expense. The operator's 50% then is responsible for all costs including fuel, maintenance, depot fees and other expenses. To increase the percentage for the driver has no basis and would only serve to encourage more of the aforementioned behaviour, thus resulting in less cars on the road to service the public. If the driver wants to take home more let him learn to work smarter and harder. We also have drivers that consistently take very reasonable money and are happy in their occupation. These drivers also take pride in their appearance, the state of their vehicle and the satisfaction of their customers.

3. The public perception of the taxi industry at present is not one that we can be terribly proud of. Some of this is warranted. The majority is not. It is only the industry working in conjunction with the regulators that can change this perception through efficient use of technology. Could it be possible in this age of IT to be combining the meter of choice with the radio and eftpos, and even a printer and inbuilt sat nav then using a driver card that could incorporate an airport card, eftpos log on and radio/meter log on to activate this system. This simplification of present equipment would create a more secure and safer system. No log on card, no work. Perhaps a maximum 14 hour log in timer could be used with at least an 8 hour lockout imposed after this time. One driver cannot hand his card to another at the end of his shift as his lockout wont allow another log on until the downtime has expired. This could ensure that the person behind the wheel is actually licensed, and also hopefully refreshed. It also gives confidence back to the public as with some education they would learn not to hire any car without an operating meter/efpos. Freeway tolls which are presently manually added into the final fare by the driver, require a solution to automatically add them to the meter while passing under the gantries during the trip. A system that removes the onus of the driver, to request further payment than the metered fare, from the paying customer, is fundamental to consumer confidence.

4. In order to make a more efficient, customer focussed service in Melbourne, that in turn will increase productivity and income for operators, that which is required is not palatable to all. But here it is anyway. All cars should operate out of one central booking office. Each company may still have their own advertising and livery but all bookings should be directed to one location. Then, if the booking should not be

covered in a set period by cars from one company, it may then be offered to cars on the same network from another company, thus ensuring the customer will be satisfied in the shortest period of time as the result of only one (1) phone call. This surprisingly enough will also help with the running efficiency of the cars allowing them access to work previously not available. Everyone is a winner. All areas of Metro Melbourne being accessed by an increased amount of cars 24/7. Another method of servicing more customers would be to bring back the multiple hire. This can be achieved with co-operation and consultation by passengers and/or rank marshals whereby two or more passengers can agree to share a cab going in the same direction and whereby the driver will charge each paying customer 75% of the metered fare at each destination. This method was extremely successful years ago during times of train strikes.

We have only touched on some of the problems and possible solutions for our industry, but can always be available for comment and consultation if needed. After 30 years in the taxi industry, some of the old and some new may be the way to the formula for success.

We may be contacted on Brian [REDACTED] and Julie [REDACTED]

Thankyou.

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