

Taxi Newsletter



Welcome to the March 2017 edition of the Taxi Newsletter.

Have your say on the future regulation of the Tasmanian taxi and hire vehicle industries

The Department of State Growth (State Growth) is currently reviewing the regulatory framework that applies to the taxi and hire vehicle industries. The review is looking at the current taxi and hire vehicle licensing regime, the setting of taxi tariffs, and the various other requirements that operators and drivers have to comply with.

State Growth would like to hear from stakeholders from both within and outside of the industries on the issues that are important to them. Interested parties are invited to make written submissions to the review by **31 March 2017**.

A Consultation Paper has been released which includes a number of questions designed to help guide the discussion. The Consultation Paper – as well as information on how to make a submission - is available at: www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/taxireview.

State Growth is also gauging stakeholder interest in attending face-to-face consultation meetings with State Growth officials about the Review in Burnie, Launceston, Devonport and Hobart before the submissions window closes. To register your interest in attending a consultation meeting, please contact Mr Luke Murphy-Gregory at State Growth on 6166 3464, or by email: taxireview@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Interim WAT trip subsidy payment

In September 2016 letters were sent out by post and emailed to WAT operators about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the effect on the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) trip subsidy.

An interim payment is being provided to WAT operators to recognise that WAT operators are no longer receiving the trip subsidy for those NDIS participants who formerly held a TAS Taxi Smartcard. These payments are now being made to those WAT operators who provided the required information. If you haven't provided the information you won't be able to be paid.

If you are a WAT operator and you need to provide us with information so we can pay you, or if you have any questions about the interim payment, call the Regulations and Concessions team on 6166 3269.

Transport Access Scheme (TAS)

The Transport Access Scheme (Taxi Subsidy) is an important Government Scheme that assists people with a life-long, permanent and severe disability by providing subsidised taxi travel. Those people who successfully apply for a Taxi Subsidy, are issued with a Taxi Smartcard. At the end of the journey, the passenger places their smartcard against or inserts it into the EFTPOS machine to receive their subsidy.

It is important that only people who have successfully applied for the Taxi Subsidy Scheme receive the subsidy. State Growth has internal auditing processes to detect people who are dishonestly accessing the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. The process detects people who have used their Taxi Smartcard against the conditions of issue as well as taxi drivers who have falsely claimed payment for fares.

It is important for taxi drivers to behave honestly with the Taxi Subsidy Scheme.

Do:

- ✓ use the card at the end of the journey
- ✓ put the correct amount in the EFTPOS machine

Do not:

- ✗ keep or make copies of passenger's card
- ✗ turn on and off the meter multiple times during a taxi journey in order to receive multiple subsidised fares

If there is evidence that a taxi driver may have dishonestly accessed the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, State Growth takes it very seriously. State Growth investigates and takes action which may result in police prosecuting the matter. As a result of one recent investigation a taxi driver was found guilty of 13 counts of dishonestly acquiring a financial advantage whilst working as a taxi driver by falsely claiming for trips in his taxi. The driver was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, of which 5 months was conditionally suspended for three years. The driver is also required to repay more than \$11,000 to State Growth.

In addition to police prosecuting in cases of misuse, State Growth may also review:

- a driver's eligibility to hold an ancillary certificate which may result in it being cancelled so they are unable to drive a taxi; and
- an accredited operator's eligibility to continue to hold accreditation which may result in it being cancelled so they are unable to provide a passenger transport service. This may also make the operator ineligible to hold some types of taxi licence.

Annual administration fee for taxi and luxury hire car (LHC) licences

On 7 February 2017 notices were posted to all holders of taxi and LHC licences advising that the annual administration fee is due to be paid by 31 March 2017. If the fee isn't paid by close of business 31 March 2017 then the licence will lapse. You are not allowed to operate a taxi or LHC service under a lapsed licence.

If you haven't received a notice or you have any questions about your licence, call the Regulations and Concessions team on 6166 3269.

Owner-operator taxi licences

There will be no additional owner-operator taxi licences (OOTLs) issued in 2017. On 21 September 2016 the Minister for Infrastructure declared that there would be no additional OOTLs made available in a Tasmanian taxi area for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

New wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) licences and temporary taxi licences are available by making application to the Transport Commission. Existing OOTLs, WATs and perpetual taxi licences can still be transferred. Approval from the Transport Commission is required for the transfer of OOTLs and WAT licences.

Cruise ship season 2016/17

The Hobart cruise ship season will continue until 15 June 2017 with another 11 cruise ships scheduled to dock at the Port of Hobart from 5 March 2017. Six parking spots in Hunter Street (near the junction with Franklin Wharf) have been approved to be used by specifically authorised restricted hire vehicle (RHV) and luxury hire car (LHC) operators who have been issued with a permit from Destination Southern Tasmania to offer and accept walk-up bookings from cruise ship passengers on relevant days. No other operators are permitted to use this area. See Attachment 1 for a map of the approved parking spots. Standing for hire in any other place is not permitted unless the vehicle is a taxi and is standing on a taxi rank.

Ancillary Certificate and Cabcharge

By law, a taxi driver must have an Ancillary Certificate (Taxi) to drive a taxi. If the driver's ancillary certificate expires, they won't be able to log on to the Cabcharge payment terminal. To renew an Ancillary Certificate a driver will need to go to Service Tasmania. If you have any questions about your Ancillary Certificate, you should call Service Tasmania on 1300 135 513.

To check if a driver has a current ancillary certificate, go to: <http://www.transport.tas.gov.au/passenger/operators> (Scroll down to Ancillary Certificates and click on 'Current Ancillary Certificates for Public Passenger Vehicles'.) This page is updated fortnightly.

Wheelchair accessible taxi program review

The Department has engaged KPMG to carry out a review of some elements of the wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) program. This review is separate to the taxi and hire vehicle regulatory review. It will focus only on issues that are specific to WATs. This will include looking at whether taxi services for wheelchair-reliant people are adequate, and whether there need to be any changes to the WAT framework, including fares and subsidies.

This work will take about three to four months to complete, and it will include targeted consultation with some taxi operators, radio networks and drivers. If you're invited to participate you will receive a letter from State Growth before KPMG's consultants contact you.

Contact Details for the Tasmanian Taxi Council

At the request of the Tasmanian Taxi Council, contact details of the office holders are provided for the information of industry members.



If you wish to discuss the industry or the Council further please contact:

President Mr. Roger Burdon (South) 0418 125 768 or via email roger.burdon@13cabs.com.au

Secretary Mr. Tony Dilger (North) 0417 036 090 or via email manager@taxicombined.com.au

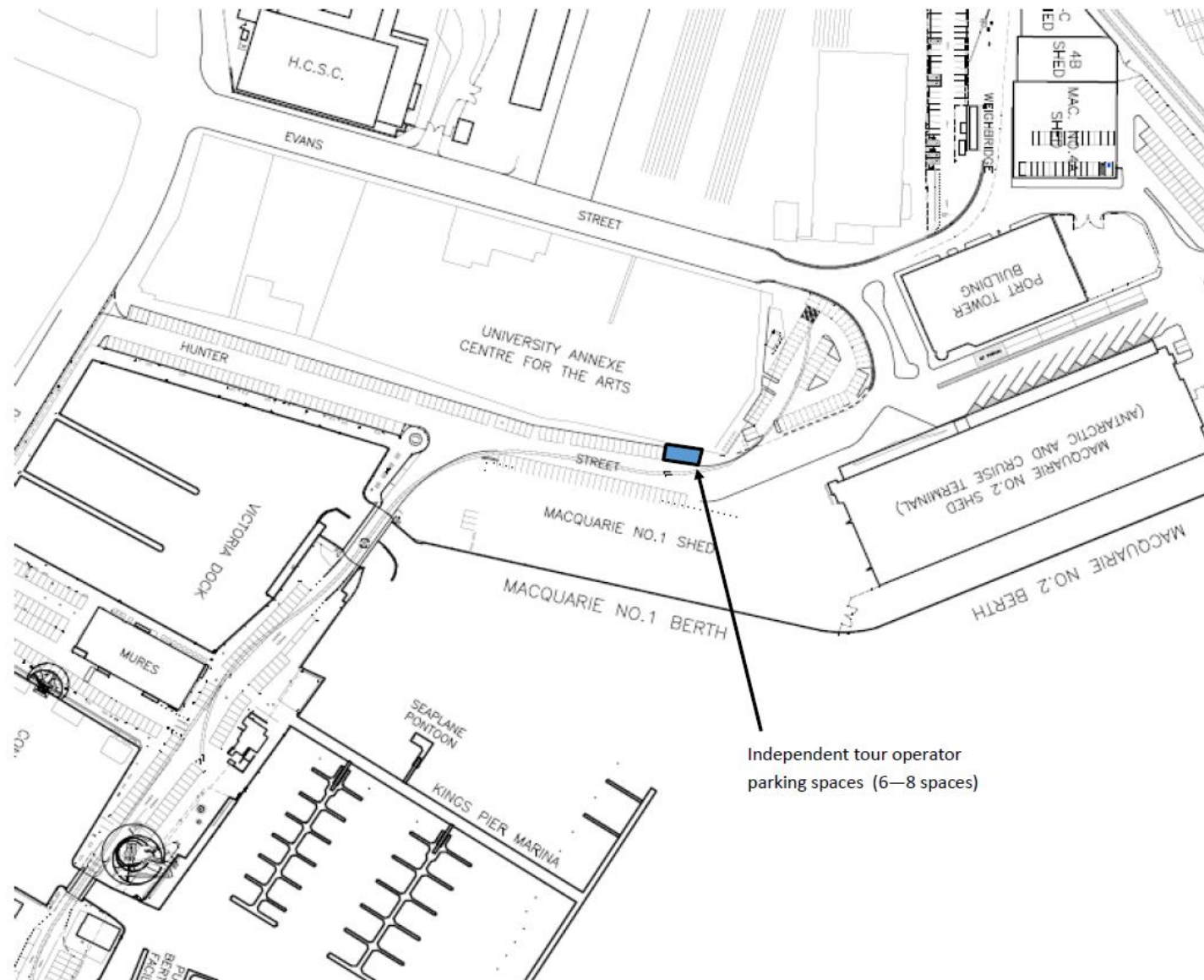
From the Regulations and Concessions Team

For operator accreditation or taxi licence enquiries:

Email: operator.accreditation@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Phone: 6166 3269

Attachment I – Approved parking spots



Independent tour operator
parking spaces (6—8 spaces)