



with
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PUBLIC DEFENDER

Maxi fares a big hit to the wallet

CROOKED cabbies are secretly hitting customers with fare hikes of around 50 per cent to travel in larger taxis, even if they haven't been requested.

A Public Defender investigation has found Maxi taxi drivers overcharging small groups of passengers despite rules outlawing the practice.

And taxi inquiry head Prof Allan Fels yesterday revealed Melbourne's taxi service had recorded its worst customer satisfaction result.

Maxi drivers can only charge a higher fare when their taxi is carrying five or more passengers or if a larger cab is requested.

Public Defender rode in five Maxi taxis with three other passengers during a driver honesty test, quickly finding one charging higher than the entitled fare.

The extra cost, on a trip from Southbank to the city, was about \$5. The slug means a taxi ride from Southern Cross Station to Melbourne Airport would cost \$22 more.

In one case of driver dishonesty, a passenger

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paid \$47 to travel from St Kilda to Murrumbeena in a Maxi taxi when the initial fare was just \$22.

Victoria's taxi rules state Maxi cabs can charge \$2.42 a kilometre instead of the standard \$1.617, only when they meet the conditions for a higher fare. The cost per minute if the taxi's speed is below 21km/h rises from 56.6c to 85c.

A spokesman for the Victorian Taxi Association, David Samuel, said most drivers did the right thing.

"Every now and then you might get somebody who overcharges a passenger," he said. "In some cases it can be an accidental overcharging..."

"But the vast majority of times drivers do not overcharge passengers and we would not say it is a common occurrence."

The Victorian Taxi Directorate received 381 complaints about fare disagreement and alleged overcharging last year.

A directorate spokesman said rogue cabbies faced fines of \$299.

HOW MUCH EXTRA YOU PAY

Southern Cross Station to Melbourne Airport
MAXI FARE \$75
REGULAR FARE \$53
+\$22

Cheltenham to MCG
MAXI FARE \$57
REGULAR FARE \$39
+\$18

Flinders Street Station to St Vincent's Hospital
MAXI FARE \$11
REGULAR FARE \$8
+\$3



Estimated fare costs of Maxi v normal taxi daytime journey using Department of Transport estimator

Focus on .05 laws

ANDREW DIMSEY



PRINCIPAL LAWYER, MAURICE BLACKBURN

ENJOYING a glass of wine or beer is a social activity indulged in by millions of Australians every day.

Even though excessive alcohol consumption and driving has become socially taboo, it still happens with often tragic consequences.

Some drivers follow a version of the rule that men can have two standard drinks and women only one in the first hour and then one every hour after that to magically stay under Victoria's blood alcohol concentration limit of .05.

But this ignores the many variables that influence a person's alcohol reading.

Because of this guesswork there have been periodic calls for Victoria's drink-driving limit to become zero.

Despite graphic campaigns, strong statements by politicians and a significant police presence, alcohol-related deaths in Victoria contribute to the staggering statistic of one road death or serious injury every six seconds world-wide.

People continue to be caught drink-driving.

And don't be fooled if your reading is right on .05.

You will be punished, too. Have you been convicted on a drink-driving charge or have one pending? What are your views on the laws?

Legal information is general in nature and is not regarded as legal advice from Maurice Blackburn or Andrew George Solicitors.

NEED LEGAL ADVICE?
BLOG NOON-1PM
heraldsun.com.au/opinion

Q AS A result of a government campaign in 2009 I purchased 50 compact fluorescent globes to replace "dirty" incandescent globes.

Many have since failed despite advertising claims of having an "up to 10 times longer life than similar incandescent globes" and "10,000 hours use".

Many lasted less than 400 hours.

Les Burman, Greenvale

A UNDER the Trade Practices Act, if a manufacturer or importer fails to comply with an express warranty it makes about its goods it must compensate the

Q&A YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

IN THE DARK



consumer for any loss. This applies even if the manufacturer's claim was not false or misleading.

Q I RUN an indoor sports centre and over the past six months have had up to 10 lights out of 50 catch fire due to what we believe is

a manufacturing fault. What can I do?

Philip Brough, Mornington

A THESE goods must be fit-for-purpose according to the Trade Practices Act. You have the right to demand a refund.

COMPLAINT OF THE WEEK

Q WE ordered a new caravan in July 2009. Ever since, we have had issues with the roof hatches, which are not the ones that were supposed to come with the van.

We now have a problem with a leaking window that the manufacturer will not repair because the van is out of warranty.

I rang and emailed and tried to explain that the van must have been leaking during the warranty period because by the time we noticed the stain on the lining boards it has been

soaking in. They virtually told us bad luck.

Denise Smith, Hurstbridge

A CONSUMER Affairs advises that as the caravan was bought before the Australian Consumer Law took effect this year you are protected by the implied warranty provisions of the Victorian Fair Trading Act and Trade Practices Act. If the goods do not match a sample or description, you can cancel the sale and obtain a refund.

If you have to fight the system, don't fight it on your own.

Maurice Blackburn
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