

15th May, 2008.

Taxi Fare Review Tribunal,
IPART,

Dear Members,

Submission re Draft Report, Taxi Fares, 2008.

The recommendation to scrap the return toll on the Harbour Bridge and Tunnel should not be sustained. Your stated reasoning is flawed. You refer to it being comparable to any other tollway "such as M4". It is different to all other tollways in that there is no alternative return route short of the Gladesville Bridge and that is impractical, whereas "such as the M4" has Parramatta Road to name but one of its alternatives. A few return trips over the Bridge each shift can cut deeply into earnings and unpaid returns are very common.

In relation to fuel cost reviews it should be remembered that, inflation aside, our LPG costs rise in our summer and "fall" in our winter. The reasoning given is that there is higher demand in the northern hemisphere's winter, pushing the price up. An October review may be out of step.

Ipart suggests an Industry Review. In my thirty five years in this business there have been a number of Government based industry reviews – the most recent of which still has not been finalised and its results remain a secret, with those on the task force associated with it apparently required to sign confidentiality agreements.

The value assigned to vehicle lease payments is a joke. Lease payments must be based on new vehicle lease rates not second hand high mileage ex-company vehicles otherwise it can only drive down the quality of vehicles over the fleet in the long term. Every other business supplies its staff with new vehicles. I'd suggest the use of second hand vehicles by a percentage of taxi operators is rather a reflection of the viability of the business than what it should be. Your government cars are purchased new, not second hand!

The rate assigned to a mechanic is \$52 per hour. Regardless of the Pricewaterhouse survey would you please inform me where such mechanics are hiding – a lot of people would like to know? Then again, maybe not; as you generally only get what you pay for (if you're lucky).

Productivity remains a "bone of contention". Network gains should be reflected in charges to operators. The productivity of an experienced driver may be greater than an inexperienced driver and there will always be a percentage of both in the mix but, again I say, the changes in parking laws (with the deletion of "No Standing", the changing of "No Standing" zones to "No Stopping", the reduction in "No Parking" zones and the extension of many "Bus Zones" (which are in fact no stopping for any vehicle other than a bus) and the stringent enforcement of them now that Councils get the revenue (not that any person should be expected or asked to break the law to make a living or provide a service) has crippled productivity. *I offer to*

take you for a short ride and show you how it almost totally restricts the legal operation of a taxi. You claim one extra paid trip per shift. I am telling you we have **lost numerous** trips per shift unless we are accepting of breaching the law and wearing numerous \$185 fines that arrive via the post a few days later. The ATDA's quote "GPS, online bookings, smarter payment systems" do not contribute to extra fares per shift.

The draft report revenue per kilometre is erroneous. It does, in fact, vary dramatically from driver to driver, from day to day and from "citycab" to "suburban cab" for many reasons such as city and suburban population densities varying, including from suburban area to suburban area.

I note that both the ATDA and NSWTDAs are referred to regularly in the report. I also note that in both their submissions they were strongly critical of previous IPART tribunals for not giving them the recognition they believed they deserved, to the point of almost bullying you. May I suggest that, whilst all submissions deserve consideration, neither of those associations represent many in the industry. It has been suggested they could hold their meetings in a 'phone booth and that the ATDA was born out of internal ego problems in the NSWTDA. In any case, I believe they represent a very small number in the industry and the experience in running taxis is very limited, so I hope their "bullying" has not been the cause of the noted increase in references or credibility.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to this enquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Fletcher