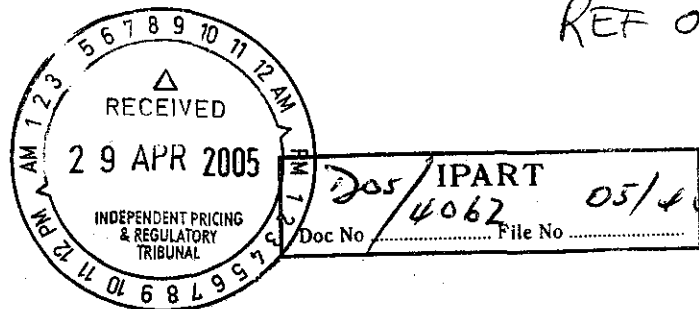


REF 05/40



28-04-05

Dear Sir,

I have held a taxi driver's licence since 1977 and worked continually since then both full and part time, (but for four months total licence suspension in 1985 and 1993), the last three years as a silver service driver.

I wish to address the proposed surcharge on booking a luxury taxi and also fares generally.

Regarding luxury taxis, under no circumstances should a higher-than-normal booking fee be considered:

- (1) Four out of five luxury cab bookings would be lost if a surcharge was introduced
- (2) Already there is a perception among some potential passengers that luxury cabs cost more on the meter, resulting from several dishonest drivers. These passengers walk past the luxury taxi on a rank and refrain from hailing a luxury cab on the street. The number of these people would greatly increase were a surcharge on the booking fee to be introduced, since many people do not distinguish the booking fee from the fare rate.
- (3) The combination of (1) and (2) would lead to a large reduction in the number of passengers for the luxury cab driver who does not target regular private clients. It could reach the point where the luxury cab driver is better off in a non-luxury vehicle.

Regarding fares in general, too often the following items are not considered:

- (1) The large impact of the proliferation of shuttle buses on the amount of work for taxis at the airport
- (2) The reduction in business travel resulting from email's having eliminated the need for many meetings
- (3) The considerable relative drop in the price of small cars
- (4) The much smaller size in generations Y and X of the largest demographic of taxi users, that is people under the age of 35
- (5) The decentralisation and "deregulation" of entertainment in the 24-hour licensed premises and (for example) large cinema complexes in every suburban "hub" reducing the numbers of long fares.

All these above factors have had a marked impact on the amount of taxi use in the recent past.

More effective taxi service, and thus better value for passengers' money was also provided when the booking system was only partly computerised. In the past, when customers checked back after waiting for 20 minutes, operators strove to get their booking accepted in view of their patience and loyalty (that is, not just jumping in their car, walking to the nearest main street to hail, ringing several companies etc.).

Such striving was also practised to get airport-bound people specially served by describing where difficult-to-find streets were. I get many complaints in my area of the inner-west from both these categories of people: the "check-backers" on local-trip jobs (with some people on Saturday nights waiting up to an hour and a half) and people in difficult-to-access streets, particularly when they are airport-bound.

Delays are also increased by the fully computerised system because drivers naturally wish to retain a high spot in the suburb queue, and remain logged in to the one suburb, but are offered a job when they have proceeded some distance from that suburb. This means that jobs are often offered to the number one car in the queue who is however very far from being the closest car to the job.

With partial computerisation, ( I think it was termed stage three), mistaken job details were avoided by in-car screens, and messages were effectively broadcast, but there were also the valuable benefits from operators' judgment and discretion particularly for passengers waiting and ringing back, passengers in difficult-to-find streets and airport-bound passengers with obviously crucial, flight-catching deadlines.

Thank you for considering the above points in your review.

Stephen Jenkins