

TAXIS.PLUS

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Submission to ESC VIC on Taxi Fare Surcharge

Taxis.Plus is a new Taxi Network, due to extend its operations and systems from Sydney, NSW to the whole of Australia in 2023. Its point of difference is an entirely new, app based, operating system in which all the Taxi functions flow through a commercially available Android Tablet storing all data on the 'Cloud', and providing access to authorised parties without charge. The particular relevance to this ESC Vic Review is in the processes of Passenger Fare Transactions which are conducted within the App and on the device.

The Meter is a "soft meter" on the device. There is no supplementary device for the Fare Transaction and the Receipt is on the App and e-mailed to the Registered Passenger Address. Costs of equipment are minimized, as are issues of maintenance. We do have a significant issue as to the processing of the Multi-Purpose Taxi Program fares MPTP Fares and object very strongly to the anti-competitive requirements to use, at the owner/ drivers expense, another terminal.

We are quite prepared to accept a 4% Credit Card Transaction Fee on an on-going basis. Our commercial arrangements with STRIPE allow for a 1.5% charge on all transactions plus a 30c per transaction fee. This creates a loss for Taxis.Plus on fares of less than \$15.00, which we are prepared to accept. On balance we have made a commercial decision to charge the standard 4%, and recover costs overall on that basis.

We consider it unacceptable, if not impossible, to estimate and advise Fares on other than a Standard Fee.

The 4% charge on Credit / Debit Card Transactions therefore reasonably reflects the overall costs of providing the services. It takes into account the "stack" of costs incurred as per the ESC documents.

It also covers the GST complications of charging, or not charging GST on a transaction dependant on whether the transactional authority is, or is not, a Financial Institution.

The issue we have is the anti-competitive nature of an administrative requirement to only use a Cabcharge Eftpos Terminal to process MPTP cards.

It is our position that the access and operation of a community facility should not be limited to a single commercial enterprise, and especially one which has given undertakings to the ACCC to not advantage itself from its market dominance. The continued use of propriety software and hardware adds to costs and reduces Competition, and actually creates an additional cost layer in the accounting process of re-imbursing the Taxi Operator for both the 50% Fare Concession and the Lift Fee already passed on to the Driver. Such available Apps can also reduce Governmental expenses.

We suggest that the ESC considers how best to open the MPTP process to efficient Applications, and avoid the requirement of multiple terminals.

Michael Jools Taxis.Plus July 13th 2023