

# MELBOURNE AIRPORT

1 July 2019

Patrick O'Brien  
Secretary  
Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr O'Brien

## **INQUIRY INTO THE COMMERCIAL PASSENGER VEHICLE INDUSTRY ACT 2017 REFORMS**

Thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2019 inviting Melbourne Airport to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 Reforms.

As part of this process, Melbourne Airport is keen to highlight the impact that the legislation has had on the undertaking of "touting" at Melbourne Airport.

### **Previous legislation**

Previously, "touting" was an offence under section 158A of the *Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983* (VIC) (Version 207) (**section 158A**).

In practice, section 158A provided Victoria Police and Taxi Services Commission officers with the power to issue infringement notices to individuals that engaged in touting. This served as a significant deterrent.

### **Current issue**

Touting occurs at Melbourne Airport when a driver offers, solicits or induces a person to hire a motor vehicle without that motor vehicle being pre-booked or waiting its turn in the taxi rank and/or hire car queue. Drivers who tout generally place themselves at the passenger exits of the terminals, or near taxi queues, and ask people whether they want a ride in their vehicle.

At Melbourne Airport, touting creates significant issues for the operation of the forecourt and surrounding road network and for the experience of the passengers. We are also concerned about the security and safety risks that touting creates as we are unable to ensure that drivers have the necessary Victorian driver accreditation or have passed driver history and national criminal history checks.

In a survey conducted during the week of 18 March 2019, we recorded up to 50 touting incidents across Melbourne Airport in one 30-minute period. We are constantly receiving complaints from passengers about the impact of touting on their experience at Melbourne Airport, with concerns for security and safety also being raised.

Customer feedback regarding touting has increased significantly in recent months. Feedback including the poor customer experience, harassment and safety concerns associated with touting, is regularly received through our customer channels. Some examples of this feedback has been included as part of the submission. Names and certain details have been removed to ensure the privacy of the individuals.

*'I have major concerns about the large number of taxi touters inside the terminal. Yesterday at Qantas terminal I was approached by 3 individual men asking if I wanted a taxi. I firmly told them that what they were doing was illegal and they backed off very quickly. But I should not be subject to that behaviour. I also observed one of the men eyeing of a single attractive female*

*for some time and then asking if she required a taxi. This is predatory behaviour and Melbourne Airport will be held accountable should any misadventure occur'.*

*Just landed from interstate and went to the taxi rank outside the international arrivals and was approached by three men in quick succession but all working alone and touting - why don't you police this? It doesn't make me feel safe or confident as a lone female traveller and this is my home state. This is the only state I experience touting - why don't you stop this happening?*

*'I arrived on a domestic flight at 14.50 today and after collecting my case from carousel 3 made my way of the arrival hall to wait for a pick up from my long term parking company. Inside the arrivals hall I was accosted by a driver who asked me if I wanted a taxi, I ignored him. Outside, I was again accosted by a driver who asked me if I wanted a taxi'.*

*'I have been meaning to send this note for quite a while. I regularly fly interstate with work, normally 3-4 times a month and have been doing this for a number of years. I have become very annoyed and frustrated with transport 'touters' accosting me as I depart the luggage carousel area to catch a taxi or collect my car from the car park. Despite regular announcements regarding touting, they are always there. Greater efforts need to be taken to curtail or stop their activities. Plenty of words, but it appears minimal or no action'.*

*'Hi, I travel through Tullamarine at least 2 days per week over the past 3 months. I have been approached or touted by people asking if I want a taxi now 5 times'.*

*'Got hassled again tonight by chauffeur driver touting business. Just inside Virgin baggage terminal'.*

*'What are you doing to address this scourge of Touting VHA Drivers'.*

*'The taxi touts lear and lurk and it's badly lit and just downright nasty'.*

*'In the past 12 months I have been repeatedly accosted by men in bad suits touting for rides.....I have looked in vain for security to report them too but no persons of authority are to be found. Please fix this issue as it gives the airport and our city a bad first impression on visitors'.*

*'Can you please do something about the people touting for taxis as you exit the domestic terminal. Was harassed this morning on arrival'.*

*'I fly in to Melbourne on a regular basis on Tuesday night, arriving typically around 7pm to 7:30pm. Anyway as I'm leaving to Qantas terminal there is a couple of Limo/ private transport drivers who typically stand at or just outside the exit door closest to the international terminal who aren't pre-booked asking people very suspiciously if they require a taxi. I have been approached on a number of occasions in which I always refuse. It used to be just be the one guy there, now there are at least two of three of them doing it. I first noticed it back in March this year but now I have noticed that it is happening at least every Tuesday. I can't say for other days as I only fly into Melbourne on Tuesdays. I just wanted to let you know because its starting to get out of hand'.*

*'I arrived back today and sure enough around 4-8 well dressed men - who looked like thugs - approaching customers and asking whether we wanted a taxi'.*

*'Why isn't there any attempt made to remove the aggressive taxi touts that are always at the baggage claim exit doors and are ripping off unsuspecting people?'*

Despite section 158A being repealed on 2 July 2018, the *Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 (VIC) (Act)* does not contain an equivalent provision prohibiting touting. As a result, Victoria Police and Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria officers no longer have the power to issue infringement notices for this offence and touting has become a significant problem for Melbourne Airport and its passengers.

**Recommended solution**

We respectfully request that an equivalent to section 158A be inserted into the Act in order to address and prevent the security, safety and operational concerns related to touting at Melbourne Airport.

Please contact Kathryn Hodges on [REDACTED] to discuss further.

Regards,

[REDACTED]  
Lorie Argus  
Chief, Parking & Ground Access