



## Community transport and council information

# Getting started in the commercial passenger vehicle industry

**The Victorian Government is making changes to the taxi and hire car industry to improve choice and deliver safer, more responsive services for passengers.**

It's now easier for businesses to enter the market, thanks to new low cost licences.

The reforms provide new opportunities for community transport providers and councils to deliver commercial passenger vehicle services and charitable services, and further opportunities will open up throughout 2018.

### Current opportunities

#### What are commercial passenger vehicle services?

Commercial passenger vehicle services transport passengers, for a fare, to and from specific destinations. A service may be booked (pre-arranged by phone or through a mobile device 'app.')

or unbooked (from taxi ranks or hailing from the street).

#### Who can provide commercial passenger vehicle services in Victoria?

Providers of commercial passenger vehicle services in Victoria must be approved by the Taxi Services Commission (TSC). To be an approved service, a commercial passenger vehicle service must have:

- the driver accredited by the TSC
- the vehicle licensed by the TSC
- the booking service accredited by the TSC (where booked services are provided).

Most charitable services, including community transport providers and services run by councils, do not need to be accredited with the TSC. This is because these services are usually provided for a token amount or for free – they are not commercial services.

However, under the government's reforms, community transport providers and councils can deliver commercial passenger vehicle services in addition to charitable services.

Community transport providers and councils may wish to expand their scope of services to provide commercial passenger vehicle services with existing fleets or additional vehicles.

**Driver accreditation**

All drivers providing commercial passenger vehicle services must be accredited by the TSC, regardless of whether they are a volunteer, employee or contractor. This requires assessment of the driver’s criminal history, road safety history and medical status.

To drive a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi, drivers also need to pass an additional assessment to ensure they can provide these specific services and safely load and unload passengers and wheelchairs. Applications can be made online for a nominal fee and most accreditation lasts three years.

Drivers for certain charitable services do not need to be accredited by the TSC when providing those services. Drivers for certain charitable services do not need to be accredited by the TSC when providing those services.

Community transport providers and councils considering providing commercial services in future may want to start the driver accreditation process in advance.

**Obtaining a taxi or hire car licence**

Community transport and council vehicles can be used to provide commercial passenger vehicle services if the vehicles are licensed by the TSC. Those vehicles can also continue to provide charitable services.

All licenses can be obtained online and incur an annual administration fee of \$52.90. Terms and conditions apply. At present, vehicles can be licensed either as a taxi, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi or hire car.

Licence type	Apply for this licence to	Vehicle requirements
<b>Taxi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP)</li> <li>• Provide booked and unbooked services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security camera, taxi dome, signage</li> <li>• Maximum fare set by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) (exceptions apply)</li> <li>• Pay relevant TAC charge</li> </ul>
<b>Wheelchair Accessible Taxi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to MPTP</li> <li>• Provide services in a vehicle which carries the passenger in their wheelchair or carries a scooter</li> <li>• Provide booked and unbooked services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport requirements</li> <li>• Security camera, taxi dome and signage</li> <li>• Maximum fare set by the ESC (exceptions apply)</li> <li>• Pay relevant TAC charge</li> </ul>
<b>Hire car</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide booked services only</li> <li>• Cannot access MPTP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadworthy private vehicle required only</li> </ul>



## **Booking Service Provider accreditation**

A business or person that provides booking services for commercial passenger vehicles may also need to be accredited by the TSC. Booking Service Providers take requests for taxi or hire care services and organise vehicles to deliver them.

Booking services may be automated, online, through a phone service or smartphone application or any other means of communication.

Charitable services, including community transport providers and councils, may want to expand their services to provide booking services with existing vehicles. Applying for accreditation as a Booking Service Provider is simple and inexpensive.

Accredited booking services have important obligations for the safety of passengers and drivers. Booking services may also be liable to pay the new commercial passenger vehicle service levy when it begins later in 2018.

Visit the State Revenue Office website, [sro.vic.gov.au](http://sro.vic.gov.au), for more information about the levy.

## **How are fares set?**

Hire car providers are responsible for setting their own fares. At present, the ESC sets the maximum fares for taxi services and Wheelchair Accessible Taxi services. The maximum fares only apply to services in metropolitan and urban taxi zones. There is no maximum fare applied to regional and country licence zones.

## **Providing accessible services**

Commercial passenger vehicles play an important role in providing point-to-point transport for people with a disability. Wheelchair and scooter users can book specific wheelchair accessible vehicles for transport and these services are prioritised by law. Taxis licensed to transport wheelchairs and scooters must meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport requirements.

## **Multi Purpose Taxi Program**

The MPTP assists with the travel needs of people with severe and permanent disabilities by subsidising taxi fares to members. It provides a subsidy of up to 50 per cent of the fare and a lifting fee for the driver and vehicle operator, where members use a wheelchair or scooter. Currently, only vehicles licensed as a taxi with the required equipment can access the MPTP.



## Future opportunities for community transport providers

The Victorian Government is currently considering changes to the way it supports accessible services and the regulations it uses to implement the new commercial passenger vehicle industry laws. This should create more opportunities for community transport providers and councils in the commercial sector.

## Access to the Multi Purpose Taxi Program

Currently, access to the MPTP requires a vehicle to be customised as a taxi which requires significant up-front costs. The government is considering how to improve the number and range of MPTP services available to members. One option is to expand the program to allow all accredited commercial passenger vehicles to participate, not just taxis. Further information will be available during 2018.

## Simpler regulatory requirements

The government's commercial passenger vehicle reform legislation passed the Victorian Parliament in 2017 and will commence in mid-2018. When this happens, taxi and hire car licences will be replaced by a commercial passenger vehicle registration with the TSC.

New regulations are expected to simplify the requirements for all commercial passenger vehicle service providers.

Community transport providers and councils are encouraged to provide input when the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources consults on the draft regulations in early 2018.

## Tax and other obligations

The commercial passenger vehicle industry provides great opportunities for community transport providers and councils looking to expand their offering. However, service providers need to be aware of their obligations.

The practical impact of registration and accreditation will be different for each provider. The TSC can assist with further information.

Community transport providers and councils thinking about delivering commercial passenger vehicle services also need to seek independent advice about the tax, legal and financial implications for their organisation.

## More information

Phone the TSC Stakeholder Engagement team on 1800 638 802 or email [contact@taxi.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@taxi.vic.gov.au).

