

Taxi fares stay the same - but messy passengers will pay

The cost of catching a cab from the street or taxi rank will stay the same, but messy passengers may be slugged with a cleaning fee following the latest ruling by the state's economic regulator.

The Essential Services Commission has left maximum unbooked fares unchanged while introducing a new cleaning charge of up to \$120 for passengers who make a mess that takes a cab off the road for cleaning.

The commission's director of price monitoring and regulation Marcus Crudden says drivers are sometimes off the road for hours cleaning up after particularly messy passengers.

"Passengers who vomit, or spill food or drink are costing drivers time and money and it's only fair for them to be compensated for that time," he said.

Mr Crudden says other commercial passenger services, including ridesharing services, already charge a cleaning fee.

"Allowing unbooked taxis to also recover these costs will put our taxis in line with those in other states," he said.

This is the first pricing decision for unbooked commercial passenger vehicles under the Victorian Government's [commercial passenger vehicle industry reforms](#), which deregulated prices for booked taxis while maximum fares for unbooked services are still capped.

Unbooked services include hailing a vehicle from the street or taking a taxi from a rank, while booked services are arranged through an app, online or over the phone.

Mr Crudden says, after careful consideration, the commission determined that raising maximum fares in a rapidly changing sector could deter customers from using taxis.

"In the context of all the changes underway in the industry, and noting taxis can already lower their fares as a way of attracting more passengers, the commission decided to leave maximum fares unchanged for now," he said.

The commission's decision covers fares in metropolitan Melbourne and urban and large regional zones including Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Frankston, Dandenong and the Mornington Peninsula.

The new cleaning fee comes into effect on **1 October 2018**

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