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ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Our annual conference is just six weeks away. Although registrations are steadily rolling in, for planning and budgetary purposes, it would be greatly appreciated if those intending to register, do so by the end of August at the latest.

Because the business programme is focusing on green/climate change issues, and will address how the taxi industry must change to meet the challenges presented by Government's sustainable transport initiatives, it is strongly recommended that all taxi company managers and directors attend. There is little doubt that this issue will determine the future direction of the taxi business. It is therefore vital that taxi company leaders fully understand the concept of carbon neutrality and the range of changes that need to be made to ensure the ongoing future viability of their operations.

We have attracted speakers on the subject from Government departments, vehicle manufacturers, carbon neutral certification agencies and business leaders with considerable experience in changing their organisations to meet the "green issues" challenges.

Transport Safety Minister Hon Harry Duynhoven has agreed to again speak at the conference and we will also have presentations from the CEO, policy and operational staff of the newly created New Zealand Transport Agency. Additionally we will also have presentations from representatives of the Ministry of Education, Tranzqual ITO, the Inland Revenue and the Immigration Service.

Whilst the business programme is fairly solid, it won't be all work and no play as we have organised a social programme that will provide plenty of fun and entertainment as well as good networking opportunities.

This year's conference trade display will be the biggest ever, with participants featuring the very latest taxi technology available. For the first time in many years three major vehicle manufacturers will be represented and displaying vehicles that offer the best options for the future in terms of low emissions and fuel efficiency.

Registration forms are obtainable in electronic format by emailing your request to tim@taxifed.co.nz

FEDERATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Preliminary notice is given of the Federation's AGM which will be held at approximately 1.30pm on Wednesday 1 October at the War Memorial Conference Centre, Marine Parade, Napier. A formal meeting notice and meeting papers will be sent to member companies in early September.

Members are reminded that any remits, notices of motion and nominations for Life Membership should be forwarded to the Federation's office by Friday 29 August.

COUNCILLORS

Please could branch secretaries and regional representatives advise by 29 August the name (names) of those persons appointed to the position of councillor for their region.

BRAILLE SIGNAGE

The production of braille signage orders received to date is nearly complete, these will be dispatched and invoiced to member companies next week.

It would be appreciated if the invoices could be paid immediately on receipt as the Federation has entirely funded the production of the signs.

If any member companies have omitted to order their braille signs please do so urgently or you run the risk of being non-compliant by 1 October (the date the signs are legally required).

MOT COMPULSORY THIRD PART INSURANCE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

The Ministry of Transport has released a comprehensive discussion document that examines the issues surrounding the possible introduction of a compulsory third party insurance scheme for motor vehicles.

The National Executive discussed the document at their recent meeting and sought some expert opinion. Since the meeting we have sought additional advice and recently held a telephone conference to further discuss the issues involved.

After fully considering the pros and cons it was decided that the Federation should support the proposal on the proviso that any system had the ability to effectively capture all vehicles, as we were concerned that any potential scheme would be flawed unless the current 25% of vehicles that are uninsured were totally captured. We have adopted this position in recognition of the difficult and costly experience of many taxi operators that have had "not at fault" accidents and where the other party has been uninsured.

The Federation's submission will be available electronically after 15 August. Please email your request to tim@taxifed.co.nz.

DEDICATED TAXI ENFORCEMENT

Over recent months it became increasingly concerning that the pedantic revenue gathering activity of the Dedicated Taxi Enforcement Team was causing real problems for many of our operators and drivers. It was also obvious that any attempts to get their management to discuss issues or adopt a more reasonable approach were in the main falling on deaf ears.

The Federation made representations on behalf of many operators and drivers that had received infringement notices; however in most cases we were unsuccessful in our efforts to get the notices waived. We also supported some operators/drivers in legal challenges as we were keen to get clear rulings/establish precedents. Most of these matters have yet to reach court or LTNZ have withdrawn at the eleventh hour.

The Federation made representations to senior LTNZ management some weeks ago where we suggested that changes needed to be made to the focus of the team's activity, as we were concerned that resistance was developing to such an extent that it could seriously undermine the team's effectiveness.

Anecdotal reports indicate that in general there has been a backing off on minor issues since that meeting and that warnings and education are now much more common. Issues involving safety and driving hours offences however, will continue to attract a hard line.

Recent discussions with other LTNZ officials have indicated that the focus of activity from now on will be on ATO's, with both relationship staff and dedicated enforcement personnel concentrating on ATO's meeting their compliance obligations contained in the Operator Licensing Rule. In our view this is where the activity should be applied and where it is likely to have the best results.

"P" ENDORSEMENT RENEWAL DELAYS

We have fielded many enquires from member companies and individuals about delays in the "P" endorsement renewal process. In many cases applicants have not received their renewal prior to the expiry of their current endorsement, despite lodging the application six weeks prior; thus they have been unable to work. The delays have been caused by the considerable backlog in the police vetting process.

We have written to both the Ministers of Transport Safety and Police about the unacceptable situation, whereby applicants through no fault of their own, are being denied from earning a living due to Government agency/departments inability to properly manage their workload so as to give "on time" results. Both ministers have indicated that steps are being taken to improve the process, but have indicated this may take some time fully rectify. In the meantime we have since organised a high priority clearance process with LTNZ and their agreement to issue letters authorizing applicants to drive on their expired endorsements, providing their application was lodged six weeks prior to their current endorsement expiring.

SESTA CONTACTS

Although we have attempted to keep member companies up to date on developments in respect of problems being experienced with SESTA contracts, it is worth summarising what has happened to date and what is expected to happen from here on in.

We have been inundated with many individual problems; essentially there are two main issues that are causing concern for many of our members engaged in SESTA contracts. The first is what appears to be the unilateral reduction of agreed contract prices, and the second is the formula being applied to outside the threshold/ one off/ changed respite arrangement adjustments. Although not exclusively most of the more serious problems seem to have arisen in the contracts administered by Multiserve Trust (the Ministry's northern agent).

We recently convened a meeting with some of the larger providers in an attempt to identify the issues. At this meeting it was decided to engage a lawyer to establish if we had grounds for a possible breach of contract action. A further meeting was held with the lawyer, and it appears with some possible small exceptions that neither the Ministry nor their agents have acted outside what the contract allows them to do.

Since that meeting the Federation representatives met with Ministry officials who indicated that some recently approved (by the Ministry's senior management) variations should address most of our concerns.

Since then the Ministry has issued a bulletin on the changes and held a series of workshops and one off meetings to explain how the changes will work in practical terms.

Although we are still waiting for a re-worked adjustment template to be delivered, it appears that most of the major issues have been resolved or are on the way to being resolved.

NEW ZEALAND LAND TRANSPORT AGENCY

Most of the work has been done in merging the operations of Transit and Land Transport New Zealand to form the *new* New Zealand Transport Agency.

Because of delays in the legislation formalising the merger, the new organisation did not officially become an entity until 1 August.

We are waiting with interest to see who the CEO designate Geoff Dangerfield has appointed as his General Managers, particularly in the key areas of policy compliance and regional control.

HYUNDAI SPECIAL GRANDEUR DEAL

Hyundai Motors New Zealand have advised that they will have 5 only 2008 (facelift model) Hyundai Grandeur 2.2 CRDi (white with charcoal leather) vehicles available in late November and have offered them to Federation members at a heavily discounted price of just \$41,500 including GST.

This price represents a further \$3,600 saving on the current Federation discount on this luxury model (18%). These vehicles normally retail at \$54,000.

These luxury vehicles will have very low mileage as they are only being used by FIFA officials during their world under 17 Women's Football Tournament being held in Auckland from 8 November.

If any of your operators are interested in this amazing, never to be repeated offer, please contact Harley Russell from Hyundai Motors New Zealand on (04) 499 3344.

BRIAN WHYTE

Long serving North Island Small Centers representative and National Executive member Brian Whyte has decided to resign from both positions for health reasons.

We thank Brian for his diligent and committed contribution over many years and wish him well in his efforts to recover full health.