

# GLOBAL NEWS



## UNDERCUTTING BUSES IN IRELAND?

Irish taxi driver representatives have denied that their drivers are breaking the law as they offer to undercut bus services to Dublin Airport during the busy summer season. Several years ago, a similar exercise by London drivers was outlawed when airport bus companies complained that drivers were pulling up at bus stops to offer cheap multiple passenger Heathrow trips. The London PCO and police described the process as touting and it was stopped.

The Irish taxi companies have defended the practice, saying their members are simply trying to generate business and make people aware that they can travel in a cab for less. A number of the Irish taxi drivers have taken passengers from Dalkey, south Dublin, to the airport along the route made popular by a private bus company known as the Patton Flyer. While the bus charged 7 Euros one way for the trip - raised to 8 Euros from August 1 – the resourceful taxi drivers were offering to take customers for 6 Euros. The driver then fills up the cab at various stops en route to the airport.

It is a practice that is believed to be taking place on several bus routes nationwide, but the Irish Taxi regulator told Global News that any driver who offered an 'off-meter' fare would be breaking the law.

## AUSSI CAB DRIVERS PUT COMFORT BEFORE SAFETY!

Jim Biachino has been driving a cab on Sydney's streets for more years than he cares to remember and says that he generally enjoys it. But several weeks ago he joined a protest by Sydney cab drivers who were against the compulsory use in New South Wales of safety screens separating drivers from passengers: "If you put a dog into a cage like that and leave it there for two hours, the animal rights movement would be on to you quicker than you can blink an eye," said Mr Biachino gesturing to the plastic screen intended to protect drivers from assaults. "I'm a pretty big fellow and I have only about two inches either way to move with the screen installed."

Hundreds of taxis blocked traffic on busy Macquarie Street outside the State Parliament for more than an hour as drivers shouted slogans against the screens. The safety screens have been compulsory in the State's taxis for several years and owners are subject to fines of up to A\$500 and confiscation of their taxi licences if they fail to install the barriers! The barriers, together with CCTV cameras, are intended to reduce the number of attacks on drivers, but the possibility of being trapped during an accident, the difficulty of communicating with passengers and the heat trapped in the plastic compartment during summer, has upset many drivers.

The protesters demanded that those responsible for the legislation should spend time sitting in the driver's seat of a taxi behind one of the screens! No one took up their offer, but a spokesperson compared the screens with the introduction of seat belts in the 1960s and random breath testing in the 1980s.

"Every time there is change in terms of safety measures, there is an element of resistance," he said. Explaining to Taxi Globe exactly why they were complaining – after all, London drivers have been always been separated from their passengers – a Sydney driver said that the London style cabs had far more room for the air to circulate and that the plastic, as against the London-style glass partition, just trapped the heat forcing the air conditioning up to it's maximum. In addition to the extra fuel cost, on a really hot day, the AC just couldn't keep the heat out when a shield had been fitted.

## CHINESE TAXI DRIVER IS A MASS MURDERER

Taxi Globe is reluctant to use the expression fellow taxi driver when it comes to telling the story of 38-year-old Chinese driver Zhou Wen. However, that is precisely what he is – or was – having now been found guilty of murdering six of his female passengers by strangulation. He now faces execution, although suspicion says it would be delayed until the Olympics had been completed!

Wen, from Anshan city in the north east Liaoning province of China, became known as the 'Taxi Demon'. His guilt was firmly established when it was discovered that he had kept a diary recording where he dumped the bodies. He later confessed to the murders saying that he hated women. When asked why he kept the diary, he told police that he knew one day he would be arrested and so he kept the diary in case he couldn't remember where he had put the bodies!

Following his arrest, jubilant local residents took to the streets celebrating, letting off firecrackers and cheering. The 'Taxi Demon' had caused panic among local citizens and women even stopped travelling on their own. Even Zhou Wen's murders pale into insignificance when compared to the introverted Chinese drifter who recently confessed to 65 killings in central China, where he murdered his victims in their sleep with axes and shovels and then often had sex with the women after killing them. In another Chinese case a man strangled 17 children...

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