

GLOBAL NEWS



New Zealand Taxi Passengers Asking For “White Drivers?”

Nicky Wagner is a New Zealand MP and Deputy-Chairperson of the Local Government and Environment Committee. She also caused the proverbial to hit the fan recently when coming out with the statement that some taxi companies in Christchurch were taking calls from customers requesting white drivers only. The problem arose following the recent brutal murder of Afghan driver Abdulrahman Ikhtiari. Ms Wagner claimed she has spoken to some taxi drivers and company owners since then and that several had said they've taken calls from passengers that “only wanted white drivers.”

She added: “You can say it's a racist comment or that there's a perception by the public that ethnic drivers don't know the city as well, so they end up driving longer to get to their destination. However, some companies out there believe that it is a racial issue and have told passengers they cannot assign drivers according to their ethnicity.”

She also said she had heard horrendous stories of abuse suffered by taxi drivers, especially towards the weekends and that some ethnic drivers had been attacked by knife-carrying thugs. Her answer to the problem was that there needed to be better communication between drivers and the police, although most of the incidents tended to happen when the police were at their busiest and unable to provide an immediate response.

“There are a large number of immigrants working in the taxi industry, bars and restaurants, dairies and service stations,” Ms Wagner added. “They generally work at night, are usually lowly paid but serve the community. And are getting abused. It's just not good enough.”

Dead Silly In Taiwan!

A Taiwanese taxi driver drove passengers around for a day with a corpse sitting in his front seat, according to a Taiwanese television report! According to TV channel TVBS, the taxi driver, named only as Wang, picked up a drug addict friend Kuo Chun-chieh in their home region of Changhwa County in west Taiwan one evening.

Kuo, aged 35, was drunk and asked Wang to drive him to see a friend. From his friend's home, Kuo picked up a parcel, got back into the taxi, and asked Wang to drive him to Taichung City. Sitting in the front seat beside the driver, Kuo then injected himself in the arm and passed out. Wang, believing Kuo was sleeping, drove the taxi home, leaving Kuo inside.

Next morning, Wang drove the taxi around and picked up several passengers during the day with Kuo still slumped in the front seat! It was not until about 10pm the following day that Wang, having at some point realised Kuo was dead, drove to a police station to report the death! An autopsy found Kuo that had died from a drug overdose.

Police said they found it hard to believe Wang did not know Kuo was already dead when he drove the body around for a whole day. “I just thought he was tired,” said the mortified driver!

Love Me Tender Says Cleveland Cabbie!

He may have been born as David Amen, but Taxi Globe is convinced that he is really the king of rock n'roll, Elvis Presley! Dave has been dressing in his Elvis wardrobe while driving his cab in downtown Cleveland (Ohio), where the world's number one rock n'roll Hall of Fame is situated, since 2000 and has become a local sight. He also has an amazing knowledge of Elvis and rarely fails to answer an Elvis question from his passengers.

But while most people love him, one group don't - the local PCO, known as the city's taxi inspectors who enforce a dress code for Cleveland cabbies. To them Dave Amen is simply is a rule-breaker. Elvis, who has become something of a local hero for his defiance of the city's rules, learned recently

that he had lost an appeal for the \$60 fine he had in May when an inspector found him wearing a red Elvis costume while driving his cab - \$30 for not wearing his uniform and another \$30 for not wearing black trousers. The fine will double if he gets caught again. So has that put Elvis off? “It's become an obligation,” Elvis told us, “I feel I must stand up and be counted now!”

Several months ago, the 40-year-old cab driver became a local hero when he stood up against the city's ban on his costume and appealed against the fine. Bumper stickers declaring Free Elvis had appearing on local cabs. He even made it onto CNN! Cleveland adopted a cab driver's dress code after the city received complaints from hotels and restaurants about the driver's appearance.



Elvis at The Limo Show 2008.

Elvis appealed against his fine basing it on an exemption in the dress code for variations based on religious beliefs - written with turbaned Sikh drivers in mind and. When he is just Dave Amen, he likes to be called the Rev David Amen, a minister in the Universal Life Church, an organisation that sells ordination certificates on the Internet.

Elvis argued that his costume is a sacramental robe. That reasoning apparently didn't carry too much weight either with city officials. Back as Elvis, Dave told Global News that he is willing to give up the red and white Elvis costumes, but he sees no reason why he should stop wearing the black one. “Let's bring that one on, man,” he said losing his appeal. “I'll be wearing the legally compliant black pants (trousers) with a blue shirt. The cape is attached to a black jacket with a wide collar. They don't have any regulations about capes in there, do they?”

However, the city remained unamused. “If he is Elvis from the neck up and if that's his normal appearance and it looks like his likeness on the driver's licence posted on the dash of his car, that should be fine,” a spokesperson told us, “but he can't wear a cape over his uniform.”

Not everyone on the council is opposed to an Elvis cab driver, but enough of them to possibly put a stop to him. Global News gave the last word to the King: “Don't be Cruel,” he told us, “they ain't nothin' but Hound Dogs crying all the time. These Heartbreak Hotels don't cry anymore man, they Love Me Tender and it makes me feel All Shook Up!”