

100,000 APP BOOKINGS AND GROWING

When Combined Communications Network launched Australia's first iPhone App for booking cabs in 2009 – nobody could even have imagined the rate at which this technology would be embraced by passengers.

Two years later, a number of Sydney authorised networks have launched their own Apps, so far passengers have used the Apps to make 100,000 bookings for taxis, and it is estimated use of the technology could be increasing by up to 10% each week.

CCN's App – called mTaxi – was the first on the market but still retains a number of elements which make it unique. mTaxi can be used in Sydney, Newcastle and Melbourne to book local cabs and the organisation has made constant updates to the point of being on the verge of launching Android and Windows versions of the App.

They are no longer alone – Premier Cabs and St George Cabs have also embraced the technology and the benefits it offers customers and the industry.

In June this year, Premier Cabs launched its iPhone App with thousands of passengers downloading it and more than 5,000 bookings being processed in the first six weeks.

"Customers say it makes the booking process quick and easy – especially as they can create their own favourite journeys which speeds up repeat bookings," said Rhonda Chesterton, General Manager, Premier Cabs.



Premier has gone a step further. iCabAirport was launched in September to target passengers going to and from the Airport – a high tech way of attracting more passengers into taxis rather than trains and shuttle services. The specific focus of the App is proving extremely popular.

In a cheeky move, Premier is promoting its Apps with full size advertisements on the sides of buses so that passengers, pedestrians and those in their cars who are stuck in traffic can't help but wonder how much quicker the journey would be in a taxi.

When St George Cabs launched its App in July, it was accompanied with strong promotion on radio stations with younger demographics. There was almost an instant download of the App by 1,500 passengers and the network estimates growth at about 10% a day.

"Passengers have responded with great enthusiasm – they especially appreciate the message which tells them which cab is on the way and the fact they can message their actual driver," said Darrel Briggs, General Manager, St George Cabs.

The authorised networks also have Apps for Premium taxi services such as Silver Service, Premier Prestige and St George Elite...all proving popular.



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The Apps are free to download and drivers are urged to support their network by encouraging passengers to download their own network's Apps and make bookings on their phones.

The CEO of the NSW Taxi Council, Peter Ramshaw said the App has significantly boosted the ability of networks to take bookings and dispatch taxis, however he held great concern for the technology being used outside the regulated environment.

"Networks are authorised – they are accountable to the NSW Government in terms of only sending authorised taxi drivers in licenced taxis and monitoring the customer service that passengers receive.

"If an App is used outside the regulated environment, there is no guarantee of who the passenger or driver is and there is no guarantee of any record to trace back if something goes wrong.

"It is a loophole that we are concerned should not be exploited as that would undermine the tremendous benefits of this technology and of our regulations which improve driver safety and customer service," said Mr Ramshaw.

The NSW Taxi Council has written to the NSW Government pointing out the potential danger and asking for the regulations to be enforced to serve their intended purpose and to ensure this technology is not used to undermine the industry's record of safety and service.

