

# COLAC Herald

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**ON THE BRINK:** Colac's Active Taxi owner Michael Harrison says he would lose \$1.5 million and Colac would be without cabs under a proposal to dramatically cut the value of his eight taxi licenses.

## Reforms could mean end of road for taxis

by Alex White

**Colac's sole taxi operator says the city's cabs would vanish under a proposal to slash the value of licences.**

Active Taxicab owner Michael Harrison said recommendations from an inquiry into Victoria's besieged taxi industry would send him bankrupt and leave Colac without cabs.

Professor Allan Fels chaired the independent inquiry and this month released a draft report with

145 recommendations including a proposal to dramatically cut taxi licence values.

Prof Fels said the licence cuts would encourage more people to enter the industry and increase the amount of taxis on the road.

The report proposes cutting city licence costs from more than \$470,000 to \$20,000.

Mr Harrison's income is tied up in his eight licences, worth up to \$200,000 each.

He said the proposal

would reduce their value to \$6000 each, crippling his business.

"It would devastate it – it would have no value," he said.

"The worst-case scenario is no cabs and it's extremely realistic," the 63-year-old said.

"I'm hoping and praying some sense comes into it – I can't see many country towns having a 24-seven taxi service."

Mr Harrison, who suffered a heart attack in March, said he and his wife

Kaye stood to lose about \$1.5 million and their business of 25 years.

"We paid it off and built it up because this is my retirement fund, this is my superannuation," he said.

"It's my whole life's work – we put everything into developing this.

"The best case I can see is that myself and my son would be driving a car and the rest wouldn't be on the road.

"Since I've had a heart attack recently with all

this stress, I don't like my chances of working too many hours a day."

Mr Harrison said he agreed with some of Prof Fels recommendations but he said encouraging more people into the taxi industry would lead to an oversupply.

"Then people will make even less, then they drop out and end up with nothing," he said.

Mr Harrison said his business' demise would have a "big impact" on Colac.

"We've got a huge elderly population and we've got a fairly large physically and mentally challenged population that we have to look after, they rely on cabs," Mr Harrison said.

"I hate to think what it would be like, yes we've got a bus service but that's very limited particularly at night and weekends."

The public has four more weeks to respond to the report before it is handed to the State Government.

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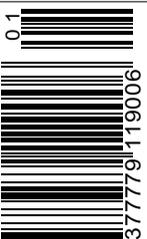


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