

# Driving with Miss Daisy

**A**re you elderly and want to have a regular driver pick you up and take you to the supermarket for a set fee? Or are you a working parent and need your kids picked up from school and taken to an after-school lesson and want a driver whom you know? Or do you have mobility difficulties and want someone to help get you and your bags inside the airport?

Driving Miss Daisy is a companion-driving service that will do this for you – at a pre-agreed price.

“We’re a taxi plus,” says Mike Dawson, one of five Driving Miss Daisy franchise owners in Christchurch.

The differences between their service and a taxi service are that a Driving Miss Daisy driver, a private-hire service, will accompany a client wherever they want to go – for example, to a medical centre, a shopping mall, or a cafe for a cup of coffee; they charge by the hour, not by distance; there’s no meter in the car; and they can usually provide the same driver for repeat trips.

Dawson says most of the



**Visiting the vet:** Driving Miss Daisy helps a client to transport a pet.

service’s clients are elderly, but not all. Some busy families want their children taken to lessons such as ballet and swimming after school.

For the elderly, a big selling point of the service is that they come to know the person who will be picking them up, and can be

accompanied on their trip if they wish.

Some clients are people who don’t have family and friends to take them out. One was a 98-year-old who hadn’t left her rest home for a long time and decided she wanted a trip to Mona Vale. Others want to go out for coffee

once a week, or have an icecream at the beach.

The charge is \$60 plus GST for an hour. If it’s a short, 10-minute trip, it’ll cost \$12. There is also the possibility of negotiating a fee for a weekly service, such as a school pickup. And if you buy 10 or 20-trip tickets, you get 1 to 3 trips free.

Dawson says the Driving Miss Daisy franchise has been successful in the North Island and is just starting to make its mark in the south. The February 22 earthquake meant that work dried up for a couple of weeks, and the drivers decided to volunteer instead. For a fortnight, they ferried people between rest homes and the hospital for free; their colleagues in the North Island pitching in with enough petrol vouchers to cover petrol costs.

Business is now working itself back to pre-quake levels, with the cars getting a thorough workout on some streets. The driver in the New Brighton/Burwood area could do with a four-wheel drive, says Dawson.

He says all the drivers are police-checked so that clients can

feel comfortable letting them into their homes or having drivers assist with jobs such as withdrawing money from ATMs. Drivers also have training to assist people with special needs.

Clients have a whole range of needs, says Dawson. When one disabled woman said she needed someone to take her out to buy new underwear, he passed the job on to his wife – she’s both a Miss Daisy driver and a registered nurse.

Some clients can’t drive, some have had their licences taken away, and others don’t like driving at night. Taking people to and from the airport at all hours is another good source of business.

Each franchise owner covers a particular area of Christchurch – Central, Cashmere, Redwood/Belfast, Burwood/New Brighton and, most recently, Bishopdale. There’s room for three more to take up a franchise, says Dawson.

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☐ For more information, phone 0800 948 432 or see [drivingmissdaisy.co.nz](http://drivingmissdaisy.co.nz)

