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# ***TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE***

## **Members present:**

Mr SR King MP (Chair)  
Mr CE Boyce MP  
Mr RI Katter MP  
Mrs JR Miller MP  
Mr BJ Mellish MP  
Mr TJ Sorensen MP

## **Staff present:**

Ms D Jeffrey (Committee Secretary)  
Ms M Telford (Assistant Committee Secretary)

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 01 APRIL 2019**

**Brisbane**

## MONDAY, 01 APRIL 2019

### The committee met at 9.35 am.

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open the public hearing for the committee's inquiry into transport technology. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which our parliament stands. My name is Shane King, the member for Kurwongbah and chair of this committee. With me here today on the committee are Mr Ted Sorensen, member for Hervey Bay and deputy chair; Mr Colin Boyce, member for Callide; Mr Bart Mellish, member for Aspley; Mrs Jo-Ann Miller, member for Bundamba; and Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. The committee will not require evidence to be given under oath, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions for witnesses so we will take those as being read. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and you will be provided with a copy of the transcript. To assist with clarity, can you please identify yourself when you first speak and speak clearly and at a reasonable pace?

The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its inquiry. Media may be present and will be subject to the chair's direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from committee staff if required. All those present today should note it is possible you might be filmed or photographed during the proceedings. I ask everyone present to please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode. I also ask if witnesses take a question on notice that you provide the information to the committee by 4 pm on Monday, 8 April 2019. This hearing is the seventh hearing the committee has held for this inquiry. Information about the hearings and the inquiry is available on the committee's web page.

### LACAZE, Mr Stephen, Private capacity

**CHAIR:** We welcome back Stephen Lacaze today. Thank you for your attendance. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Lacaze:** I am an operator in the personalised transport industry. For one reason or another, my submission was posted as 'name withheld'. It is submission 16 and supplementary submission 16a.

**CHAIR:** It has been published as yours now.

**Mr Lacaze:** Interestingly, after listening to a few of these sessions I am feeling fairly validated because the points I made, or attempted to make, was it is very difficult to pick winners in this space. What we saw from Engineers Australia last week was an admission of exactly that. They came straight in, 'The future is electric,' and on the first question, 'Well maybe it is; maybe it is something else; maybe better technology is going to emerge.'

The best window to the future is often the past. Winston Churchill had a saying that the further back you look the further forward you can see. If we look at this whole electric vehicle thing, they are not new. They have been around for 120 years. Why did liquid fuels trump them? Well, it is all there in the submission. Let us leave that one aside.

Then we move on to the next one which is autonomous vehicles. It is the big one. It is the one that has occupied TMR for the last three years, and their response is 'no time soon' is my take on it. I am going to ask the committee if I can table a page which is an extract from the regulations. Every 10 years or so the regulations have to be rewritten. This one jumped out at me somewhat because it really goes to the core of what this committee is supposed to be doing.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? There being no objection, leave is granted.

**Mr Lacaze:** I have highlighted it there. What it basically says is that if you operate in passenger transport you no longer need a control position in a motor vehicle. That is interesting. If you happen to operate a Boeing 737 Max 8, a control position seems to be a pretty useful thing to have under certain circumstances. That is the point that I am making.

When we look at 16a, which was published the day after submissions closed—it was very good that the committee granted leave to accept it—Viscelli explores some really good notions. I hope this is the sort of thing which informs government policy, because in the words of other people who have spoken here we need to be able to surf rather than lead this. We need to be able to work out which direction might suit us best and then latch on to that rather than leading it. It is about whether government looks after public interest or whether we abrogate that to corporations.

I point out that every act has a preliminary clause in it that points to public benefit. I think sometimes public benefit gets a bit sidelined in what is going on right now. If we do not seriously look at that, we can look at the chemical industries for what happens when immature technology is unleashed on the community. If we think about DDT or organophosphates or chlorinated fluorocarbons, all of those things have had a massive community cost and it is very, very difficult to wind back. Perhaps we need to be very aware that there is lots of technology. At what point do we let it all spill into the community?

**CHAIR:** A very valid point. I am sure asbestos would fall into what you are saying as well.

**Mr Lacaze:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** We will go to questions.

**Mr SORENSEN:** Examining the rail, it is not going electric any time soon. It is the same with privately provided bus services and light vehicles. If fuel tax is charged to those using electric vehicles at the same rate, it suggests that it would kill the take-up of these vehicles before it happens. Can you elaborate more on that?

**Mr Lacaze:** If we look at fuel consumption in a hybrid vehicle or a very efficient vehicle, the federal tax and excises that are on the petrol that vehicle burns would represent something around five cents a kilometre or maybe a little more. If you run an electric vehicle and if you have 20 solar panels on your shed, you can essentially drive that car on public roads for free because registration is not to pay for roads; that is to pay for tracking of the cars. That is why it is only \$100 a year. If that vehicle had a per kilometre levy of five or six cents, all of a sudden you have not only an expensive capital item but there is no benefit in it. If you have to pay for the electricity as well to charge the vehicle as well as the extra five or six cents a kilometre road use fee, why would you not just buy a cheaper, more conventional vehicle?

This is the exact thing that I am facing right now. I operate a taxi. I have three choices. I can buy a Kia Cerato for \$17,000, I can buy a Toyota Camry for \$34,000 or I can buy a Hyundai IONIQ for \$50,000. At this point in time the economics are really clear. With the \$17,000 Kia Cerato I will burn an extra \$3,000 a year worth of petrol. Why wouldn't I?

At this point in time even the hybrid vehicles are not really justifying themselves. This committee should really be aware of that. It was the 2017 personalised transport amendment bill that changed that. Why are fleet operators not taking up these options? I can speak for the taxi industry, it is not taking up electric vehicles because there is no certainty about the future and there is no viability in the industry to support that sort of capital outlay. We will be buying the cheapest cars that can do the job.

**Mr MELLISH:** Further to your answer to that question, we heard from the Taxi Council last week that LPG is a good example of the taxi industry leading the uptake of that and that was primarily driven by cost. What you seem to be saying is that cost has to be biggest factor to drive the uptake of electric or hybrid vehicles in the taxi industry?

**Mr Lacaze:** If we think back to hybrid vehicles and auto gas vehicles those were decisions that involve significant capital outlays and they were decisions that were made in a situation of certainty in a very regulated industry. You could project what the next six to eight years were going to look like. We cannot do that now. What is going to happen in a couple of years time? Who knows? Guess what? You go cheap. You go the lowest common denominator.

A topic of conversation last week was lithium batteries catching fire. This popped up in social media. There was an event in Texas—some of you would have seen it—where an electric vehicle caught fire in the dealership and they literally picked it up and dumped it in a tank of water. Apparently it saved the dealership. It probably did not do the vehicle too much good. It is all there. The graphics are there to watch.

A tank full of petrol is pretty hazardous. A tank full of gas is pretty hazardous. Technology can move to solve those issues and make them fundamentally safe. I do not know that there should be too much panic about lithium batteries. Boeing 787s had a very significant lithium battery issue when they were first built. That caused on board fires. That has been dealt with.

**Mr MELLISH:** In terms of what you are saying about uncertainty around price for the next six to eight years, is that to do with the price of cars or the treatment of the fuel excise in the future or a combination of both?

**Mr Lacaze:** No, it is industry conditions. We have a situation where we are forced to operate in a market that is in severe oversupply failure. A \$50,000 car with maybe some benefits over a period of six to eight years compared to a \$15,000 car with immediate savings is a no-brainer.

**CHAIR:** And similar warranties for the two vehicles I would imagine?

**Mr Lacaze:** Yes.

**Mr MELLISH:** In relation to terms of reference (d) you mentioned a bit about the gig economy and employment conditions for workers going forward. Can you elaborate on that a little?

**Mr Lacaze:** Viscelli makes some really good points. What we have seen with a lot of uptake of technology is that the prime jobs get replaced and what are left tend to be low-paying jobs. If we look at what has gone on over the last few years as well, the way those jobs have been packaged and made available to the workforce actually means there is another scorpion sting in them in that they tend to be precarious jobs. They are often contracting or sham contracting jobs. The people getting the benefits from the productivity are actually avoiding the wage risk of even the last little bits of the network that they have to run.

Heavy transport is probably going to be the most likely early adopter of autonomous vehicle technology. We are likely to see rumbling down our great divided highways convoys of trucks led by a pilot vehicle going from one depot on the outskirts of a city to a depot on the outskirts of another city. I am not sure why we do not just put it on trains, but let us work with road freight. Then we will have minions at the depot who will then drive it the last little bit in the city traffic.

These guys will be on substandard pay and conditions. That seems to be the inevitability. Viscelli actually puts that model very clearly and quantifies it in the 16a submission. I think you do not have to look too far to find evidence of it in our own community. Nearly every on-demand courier operation in this city operates with just as dodgy labour hire engagement rules as the taxi industry or the rideshare industry. They are actually undermining the fabric of employment in our community.

**Mr SORENSEN:** You were talking about new technology in the trucking industry and taking loads from one city right through to the next. As you said, why do they not use rail. What would be the difference between using rail and using trucks that are driven up the road by a computer?

**Mr Lacaze:** You do not take the load off the train. I have always wondered why rail is not more popular. If you look at running a semitrailer from, say, Yatala to Ourimbah to a big yard in Sydney, you have the 12-hour chunk of the trip or the 10-hour chunk of the trip with no labour and then a little bit at each end. You still have that point to point option without having to repackage or change the load or anything. Logistics is not my field, but we have seen consistently over the last 50 years road freight undermine rail freight. There is some weird economics going on there that I am at a loss to explain.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before us today.

**COLLYER, Mr Nicholas, Systemic Advocacy, Queensland Advocacy Inc.**

**TRAPPETT, Mr Geoff, Director, Inclusion Moves**

**CHAIR:** We now welcome representatives from Queensland Advocacy Inc. and Inclusion Moves. Thank you for your attendance here today. Would you each like to make a short opening statement? We might start with Mr Collyer.

**Mr Collyer:** Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be here this morning. I am from a disability advocacy organisation called Queensland Advocacy Inc. We are a statewide organisation that specialises mainly in legal services to the most vulnerable people with disability, but we also get involved in access and transport issues.

In 2015 almost one in five Australians reported living with a disability. That is roughly 18.3 per cent of the population. Around half of Australia's older population have a disability too. The emergence of automated vehicles also provides immense potential for older Australians to continue to engage and participate in the community as it does for people with disabilities. However, private sector entities that bring new technologies to market tend to serve their own interests and resist government intervention.

Uber, for example, trialled UberWAV, its wheelchair accessible vehicle platform, for three days that coincided with the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme back in October 2015. It has not provided a platform for accessible vehicles on a permanent basis in Queensland since then. Uber policy directs drivers to accommodate customers who use walkers, folding wheelchairs or other assisted devices to the maximum extent possible. We know from experience that some Uber drivers have denied people a ride because their wheelchair, even when folded, was too big to fit inside the car.

Many people with disabilities are then locked out of a convenient and cost-effective ride-sharing platform because the vehicles are not accessible. This is particularly inequitable now that many people with disabilities are transferring from the Queensland state funded Taxi Subsidy Scheme, TSS, to a lump sum transport component on their NDIS plan, which in theory would allow them to engage with Uber.

That brings me to my first point of two that I want to make this morning. That is that unregulated ride-sharing services enabled by these new transport technologies may not service people with disability and older people. There may be a need for government intervention to ensure that they do.

The second point that I want to make—and this is the most important point; it is not a technical point—is that government needs to consult with people with disabilities right from the start whenever introducing any kind of new public transport. A cautionary tale is of course the introduction of the new generation rolling stock by Queensland Rail that were commissioned in 2013.

I do not want to lay blame on either side of government, but we know that what happened was that the trains were commissioned, designed and constructed without being fully accessible. The first trains brought to Queensland were not fully accessible and not compliant with disability standards. Now the Queensland government is put in the embarrassing and costly situation of having to spend over \$100 million refurbishing the trains so that they are compliant with disability standards.

Another important point that relates to that is that even when transport is compliant with disability standards it still may not be ideal for people with disabilities. One of the purposes of introducing the NGR was to eliminate guards on urban rail. What appears to be the case is that we need guards more than ever to assist people with disability on those trains. We know that we have an ageing population and that more and more of us as we get older are going to need the assistance of actual people not technology on public transport.

**CHAIR:** Geoff, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Trappett:** Thank you very much for the invitation to speak this morning. My name is Geoff Trappett and I am the director of Inclusion Moves. Inclusion Moves is a social change organisation that has been extremely vocal through the transport sector, beginning with NGR.

Technology has a chance to be an enabler or a hindrance for people with disability, and threading that needle is vital. Threading that needle will define whether the technology we develop now is something that a person with a disability can use to be included in society or is one of those pieces of technology that was never suited to them and therefore pushes them further behind the eight ball and further behind their able-bodied peers in society. If we look at autonomous vehicles, for example, they have the potential to be great for what they call in the transport industry the first and last mile. The first and last mile is a crucial issue where, if you cannot get to a transport hub, no matter how accessible that transport hub is you will not be able to begin your journey.

Autonomous vehicles have great potential there but, with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport being what they are, and being a rather regimented act, looking at where autonomous vehicles fit as a mode of transport becomes vital. Do they fit within modes of transport that are currently covered by the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, or DSAPT? If they are not, then how do we ensure they are still bound to be an inclusive technology and that people with disability can still use them to be included in society? Will they be another scooter program that is good for a section of the community but leaves people with disability further behind?

Nick and Stephen talked a little bit about rideshare before I came in. There must be more than fancy technology apps. The fundamental transport mode behind the technology we see that is flashy and golden needs to be inclusive and non-discriminatory. We see that rideshare simply does not have the coverage of wheelchair accessible vehicles to be classed as an inclusive mode of transport. The technology behind the app can be extremely important for people in the hearing impaired community, for example, who no longer have to make a phone call to a taxi booking company because they can use a well-designed app. There are great positives that we can take from those kinds of industries, but we must ensure that the fundamental mode behind them is inclusive. We cannot use technology to cover up poor practices.

It has been suggested by Queensland Rail that we should have an app for people with disability to log when they need assistance to get on and off a train, for example. The reasoning behind that was that people with disability are being what they call in the industry overcarried. The guards, for all intents and purposes, forget they are there, and therefore the person with a disability is being carried past the station where they were planning to get off. To me, that is an example of an app being put in for an app's purpose. The fundamental issue there is staffing and training rather than technology. We cannot use apps and technology to cover up poor performance and procedure.

There are lots of ways that we can use technology, however, to ensure that people with disability are able to be included in society. Virtual reality, for example, is an area that we absolutely should be looking into when it comes to app design. A person with a disability would be able to see their train station before they arrive and know what their journey will look like from their front door to where they hop onto a bus, train or any other kind of public transport. There is massive potential for technology to be used in a positive way.

We saw it introduced a little bit with the transport app for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. For the Commonwealth Games there was an app that showed the gradient you were going to be using. For a wheelchair user, a gradient is one of the most important things when you are trying to figure out whether you are going to be able to get to a particular place, how long that is going to take and how much effort you are going to need to put in. Using open data sources that are available through some of our larger local and state governments to develop that capability within apps is incredibly important and a potential enabler for people with disability to be much more included in society than what they currently are.

Any person with a disability would be able to stand here before you and tell you that. It does not need me from Inclusion Moves to be here. If you do any good kind of co-design and include people with disability, they will absolutely tell you the same things. These are not things that have come out overnight: these are things that have been around for a number of years. If you just do good old-fashioned co-design, where you speak to your constituents and your customers and understand what their needs are for your technology and your transport, you will absolutely hear those answers. It is incredibly important that you put your customer at the centre of the design framework. It is absolutely no different for people with disability, as opposed to an able-bodied member of the community, to be at the centre of the design framework when it comes to designing inclusive public transport.

**Mr KATTER:** This question is for either of you. The system worked pretty well when we just had taxis that would go from point to point, and I think it was mandated that 20 per cent of the fleet be compliant. That is not there now. Do you think that worked effectively? I can see you are nodding.

**Mr Trappett:** Absolutely. Point-to-point transport is absolutely going to be a crucial factor for a large number of people with disability. There will always be a subset of people with disability who, due to the nature of their disability, will not be able to get from their front door to a transport hub, so that point-to-point transport will always be vital for that subset of the community. With the introduction of rideshare we have seen a reduction in the profitability of business models that hold up that point-to-point transport model. With a rideshare coming in and taking the same customers as a maxi taxi could have used, yet replacing that maxi taxi—which is in and of itself an inclusive mode of transport—with a non-accessible or a less than accessible Toyota Camry, for example, that is causing an overall reduction in the outcome of inclusive transport for people with disability.

**Mr KATTER:** Can you give us an idea how that would work for someone who lives in a suburb beyond the extent of train lines who wants to get into an appointment in the city? A taxi would have been there within 10 or 15 minutes, but what does the world look like to them now? What is the outcome of all of this?

**Mr Trappett:** I can give you a personal example. I happen to live in Fernvale, which is a town in the Somerset Regional Council just outside of Ipswich. We have one bus in and out of Fernvale per day. It is a non-accessible, non-low-floor bus. We have seen a reduction in the number of wheelchair accessible taxis that are able to service that area, and therefore that means a longer wait time for a person with a disability to be able to even get to an accessible train station in Ipswich.

**Mr KATTER:** So there has been a marked decline.

**Mr Trappett:** Absolutely. The market will continue to come under pressure as rideshare takes that business away. The market will always favour those that make a profit, and those that make a profit are not necessarily the equitable solution.

**Mr SORENSEN:** When you look at the taxi service for people with disability, you have to have a ratio. It costs a lot more for one of those vehicles. I think it is up around about \$80,000 to \$100,000. When you look at the rideshare industry, they do not have to provide any of that. I would like your thoughts on that. I had a situation the other day when I got a taxi, and the driver was going crook at me about a hospital discharge. He had to take an 84-year-old lady out of the hospital at three o'clock in the morning. He said, 'When I took her home I had to make sure that she got in the house and that she could get around in the house.' If you had a driverless car, what would happen?

**Mr Trappett:** Absolutely, Mr Sorensen. The disability sector will always tell you that the individual service that you receive from a point-to-point transport company like a taxi company is absolutely vital, and it is to a large extent because of that good co-design of training that has been developed between the disabled community and the taxi community over a number of years. It is absolutely a part of that. For people with disability, going that extra mile can be the absolute difference between having that equitable result where they are able to be an included member of society and not being able to leave their house, not being able to get to medical appointments, not being able to do their own shopping.

All of those social outcomes that are missed add up to a cost that needs to be catered for through another funding stream. If a person with disability cannot get out to do their own shopping, that means there is a cost that is transferred onto another funding body. When we are looking at decisions around transport we must not just look at things in the silo mentality of 'a maxi taxi costs more.' A maxi taxi may cost more, but it will absolutely save more in the long run if you were to take a broader view of the enabling factors that come with that as well.

**Mr Collyer:** One of the reasons that the workplace participation of people with disabilities is so low relatively speaking—I think it is about 50 per cent versus 80 per cent—is that transport simply is not accessible. Often that is because there is nobody to assist people onto the transport and off the transport.

**Mr Trappett:** With the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme we have seen a fixed price transport contribution that can be inserted in a person's National Disability Insurance Scheme plan. If you are sophisticated enough to know the right way to ask for that in your plan and if you are afforded that, it still in a lot of cases does not cover the difference between the taxi subsidy scheme, which was—and still is for a month or so now until it is removed—a Queensland government initiative available to people with National Disability Insurance Scheme packages that partly funds taxi transfers. But for a large number of people with disability the National Disability Insurance Scheme contribution is in no way making up that gap. We have simply not seen transport funding coming through in the federal plans that caters for the drop in that taxi subsidy scheme. We have seen that that taxi subsidy scheme has, in layman's terms, been 'cashed out' as part of a bilateral agreement between the state and federal governments, but people on the ground are not seeing the two as equal, which can only result in less than ideal outcomes for people with disability as far as their accessible transport needs.

**Mr MELLISH:** This is to Mr Trappett but, Mr Collyer, you might want to throw in a response as well. Talking about the NDIS as you were just now, is there a way for it to be better structured? There is a fairly large cumulative lump of money there. Is there a way for that to be better structured so that that can drive some of these rideshare organisations to actually have a maxi in their fleet or have a few more rather than the way it is at the moment?

**Mr Trappett:** We absolutely need, in my opinion, in Inclusion Moves' opinion, pressure from the state government on the federal government to ensure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme packages are individual. Having a scheme that hands out money to an individual means that the scheme's participant's packages must in themselves be individual. We cannot play one-size-fits-all when it comes to transport, when it comes to housing, when it comes to any number of other areas. Having one-size-fits-all when it comes to a contribution will always end up with those who are at the end of the margins missing out. When you are missing out you are not able to be an effective market driver as an individual. You are not able to go to any rideshare provider and say, 'I will use you as a taxpayer, as a member of the market driven community, if you provide services that are individual to me and that are accessible by me.' If you do not have those funds individually allotted to you, you are no longer going to be able to push for that, which will always mean that a person with a disability, traditionally coming from a low socio-economic background, will not be in that position to be those people to push a market to be where the market needs to be.

**Mrs MILLER:** You spoke about being able to see your train journey in particular. I had a situation in my electorate last week where at both Goodna and Redbank the lifts at the train stations were out which meant that no-one in a wheelchair or disabled could actually access the train stations. What was happening was they would get the maxi taxi or whatever down to the station and then they are stuffed. Like you said, they are not able to use the lift to be able to get onto the platform. What was happening in Redbank in particular was that they were then wheeling up and over an extremely narrow bridge that had no pedestrian access and the truckies were really, really concerned because they could have flattened them, which is not their fault, you know what I am saying. At the moment you actually do not have that service where you can actually see whether the lifts are working, which is obviously very important because if you cannot use the lift you cannot get onto the platform.

**Mr Trappett:** At the moment Queensland Rail shows any of their lift outages as information only on their service outages. They do not get allotted with a medium or a high-risk, yet for a person with a disability that is absolutely, as you say, a deal breaker for them to be able to know. We need to move to a tech space where a person with a disability knows before they leave their house what their whole of journey is going to look like—that includes outages, that includes maintenance that is being carried out on lifts. We see a number of lifts tend to go out in wet weather. People with a disability tend to just take that as a given and that is not a space that people with a disability should be in. People with a disability should be able to have the ability to move around in wet weather and get wet just the same as an able-bodied person. People with a disability, because of the complaint based nature of the Disability Discrimination Act, having to make a complaint against something every time is an extremely onerous task which means that a person with a disability will tend to think, well, can I be bothered making that complaint today or do I just accept that my outcomes are going to be less favourable than an able-bodied person's and that is certainly not the community that I want to be living in and that certainly should not be the community that the Queensland government should be aiming for.

**Mrs MILLER:** At the moment what would you suggest happens for people in my electorate who are extremely frustrated that they do not know whether or not the lifts are working? If anyone from the Minister for Transport's office is tuning in, I want those lifts fixed because no-one in my electorate at the moment who is disabled can use the train service.

**Mr Trappett:** Absolutely. People with a disability should be able to know that lifts are procured in a manner that they do not break. When they do break, one of the most crucial things is time lines: to know when a lift will be brought back on. For a person with a disability you do not just get to shut up shop and go, 'Well, no work for me today. No work for me tomorrow.' A person with a disability needs to know the time frames. That is probably the most frustrating thing for a person with a disability when it comes to any kind of transport issue. You get told that a decision on the accessibility of that train station, of that bus station, will be made in due course, it will be prioritised, it will be upgraded when there are funds available. Those answers do not get a person with a disability to work.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for this session has now expired. I appreciate your time today.



**DALLASTON, Mr David, Private capacity**

**THOMAS, Mr David, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Would you like to give us an opening statement?

**Mr Thomas:** David Thomas is my name. I am retired. I will be 80 next year and I am really angry about a lot of the things that have been happening. My background is in financial planning. I love numbers. I love the metrics of things. Who saw *Four Corners* a couple of weeks ago, the Uber story?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Thomas:** It is absolutely essential viewing for anybody involved in transport. Is anyone here aware of how debt crippled Uber is?

**CHAIR:** We have been made aware during the course of these proceedings.

**Mr Thomas:** They are gone. It is only a matter of time. I seriously question why we have allowed ourselves to be misled by overseas corporate interests. Should we not really be pursuing solid policy and planning that delivers on community benefits and not on wage theft and exploitation of workers as core to a business model, not on flooding our roads with excessive numbers of cars creating congestion and pollution, not on allowing paying patronage to move away from public transit—that is happening—not on ignoring the transport needs of our disabled and not on the abandonment of industry standards that protect consumers and expose victims to victim blaming? They are the main points.

As I said, my background was in financial planning. I like and love numbers and with Uber there is nothing but red warning flags. Boring as numbers are, they tell the truth: \$20 billion of investors' funds gone by year nine. The only funds left are junk debt bond raisings. Junk debt bonds are what corporations with a zero credit rating are able to access. They have to repay these bonds at seven per cent per annum. It is about \$5 billion I think they have got left in the bank. They are losing a billion every quarter. They will soon IPO and the original investors will be helped to bail out by criminal banks. None of us here would really love the banks, would we? Those banks over in Wall Street are really, really bad but they look after their high-net-worth clients and their high-net-worth clients are the people who have invested in these Silicon Valley scams. They have put the money in so they are going to look after them. How will they look after them? We just saw last week the other rideshare company, Lyft, a major company in the USA, went to IPO and it was oversubscribed. It was not oversubscribed because the man in the street rang up and ordered shares from his stockbroker, it was oversubscribed because the 'banksters' put mutual funds, with mum-and-dad retirement funds, into that stock. It is not nice.

The likely time frame for bankruptcy for Uber if they have a successful IPO is probably 12 to 18 months, two years maybe. We better be ready because one morning drivers and riders will wake up, try and turn on their app and it will be a blank screen. The drivers will go round to the Uber office and they will find it all boarded up. I have seen it before. It is not hard. It happens. Drivers will go unpaid, offices will be boarded up, buses will be busy and taxis will not cope. We need to plan now for this certainty. That is my presentation.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Dallaston?

**Mr Dallaston:** Good morning. I am a long-time resident of the northern suburbs of Brisbane. I live in Aspley in Mr Mellish's electorate. I have a long-abiding interest in transport and development and quite a bit of experience of Brisbane traffic because I used to be a Brisbane City Council bus driver. I am very appreciative of the opportunity to address the inquiry today because while there are obvious benefits from automation and new technologies in regional Queensland and there are great things happening in the inner cities with active and public transport—just overnight we had the announcement of five new green bridges I think it was by the new Lord Mayor—the suburbs where the majority of Queenslanders live are getting left out of the discussion.

Our relationship with cars in suburban Queensland is quite paradoxical. We worry that density is the cause of traffic congestion but we live in some of the least dense cities in the world. We feel cost of living pressure from electricity prices despite the average household spending five times more on transport than they do on electricity. We think a family needing two cars to survive is a law of nature when it is actually evidence that the growth of our suburbs has been mismanaged for decades.

Car dependency is a huge economic problem, it is a social problem and it is a health problem. Last year there was a symposium on designing healthy livable cities here in Brisbane where most of the attendees were professionals in planning and urban design, but the symposium itself was sponsored by the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Heart Foundation. The message we heard at that symposium was that we are sick and we are overweight because we do not get enough exercise because we drive everywhere. Car dependency is a mental health issue as well. People who live in car orientated housing but cannot drive—the poor, the old, the disabled and all children—are isolated, lonely and dependent on others for their daily needs.

There is a revolution in transport happening right now, but it is not automation or electrification, it is walkability. Forward-looking cities are narrowing and removing roads, reducing speed limits and reviewing their planning focus in the name of not only reducing traffic congestion, but turning car dependent dormitory suburbs back into genuine functional communities, solving the last mile problem by making the last mile smaller, by making the last mile more pleasant to walk.

I have no doubt that pretty soon all new cars available in Queensland will be electric and that automation technologies will continue to evolve and become increasingly standard. If we conclude that the future of transport is shiny new cars rather than reassessing priorities and putting people first, then we will have put Queensland firmly on the wrong track.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to questions.

**Mrs MILLER:** My issue is not so much in relation to cars; it is how people live. I did have dormitory suburbs in my electorate where both mum and dad were working—I mentioned this at the last committee hearing. Those suburbs were planned so that you could walk everywhere and have local jobs, but that is not the reality. The reality is that mum might have three young kids under five and she needs to be able to get to work, but in the meantime she has almost done a day's work dropping one kid at family day care and another one at the childcare centre or the kindergarten and then dropping the older children at school. No-one talks to these young mums. It absolutely annoys me because I was a young mum once too and no-one spoke to me or my friends about our needs. The issue is that the planning is there, but the planners do not talk to the people. Still, decades later, they are not talking to the mums about what their needs are.

I also raised the issue of obesity many, many years ago. I was probably one of the first members of this parliament who brought up the issue that we need to get out and be more active. I got flogged for it because it was considered that you do not talk about that at that particular point in time. The issue is that no-one talks to the community. No-one talks to families about their needs in relation to transport. You said we need walkability but walkability is no good to the young mum with three kids under five, is it?

**Mr Dallaston:** It depends what you mean by walkability. I did view the hearing last week when you were talking about that. I agree that in South-East Queensland the average state school catchment, for example, is maybe three or four kilometres across, so most people who live in that catchment are not going to be able to walk to school.

**Mrs MILLER:** That is right.

**Mr Dallaston:** While we have very well-meaning, active school transport programs in most councils across Queensland, they are never going to be very effective until we address those issues. In the UK, for example, there are schools where all the kids walk to school as a matter of policy, but you can only do that if the kids live close enough to the school, if you have the density that the school is a few hundred metres away and if it is a walk down a suburb an street with a 30-kilometre hour speed limit and not an arterial road full of peak hour traffic.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. My other issue, Mr Thomas, is in relation to your submission. What on earth is going to happen if your theory turns out to be right—that there will not be an Uber app and there might not be anyone in the taxi industry who is left to take it up?

**Mr Thomas:** Exactly. The rideshare business model is not a sustainable model. I think we have heard enough evidence of that this morning. It is not a sustainable model. Pretty much most of those that have started up trying to muscle in on Uber have gone bankrupt or been taken over by Uber. They were bankrupt before they were taken over—they are were just absorbed in shuffling a bit of paper. It is going to happen, so we need to plan for it.

**Mrs MILLER:** Do you think the taxi industry will come back in full force?

**Mr Thomas:** It has done it before. It has been deregulated over the years a number of times, perhaps not to the extent that it has now. When Uber came in it was all nice and shiny—BS, BS, BS. They spun lies and deception. They rubbished the taxi industry saying that we were all smelly drivers

and foreigners and what have you. They presented themselves as being Anglo Saxon, handsome young males. It is not like that. The drivers are the same across all of the platforms and they are the ones who are suffering. I was going to end my argument today—and I see it as an argument—by inviting you all to lunch and then putting down one Jatz biscuit and say, 'Here, that is what is happening to the drivers.'

**CHAIR:** That is a very appropriate illustration of what you are talking about.

**Mrs MILLER:** In relation to Jim Varghese's report—

**Mr Thomas:** I reckon that was a scam. It was a set-up. It was predetermined. It was about money—the \$20 billion that went down the drain. That is where some of it went. That is my belief.

**Mrs MILLER:** I just wanted you to comment on it, and you have commented.

**Mr MELLISH:** Following on from your point, Mr Thomas, about the cost viability or otherwise of some of these rideshare applications—you have probably half answered this anyway—do you see what happened with foodora in the food delivery industry where they packed up and left the country owing staff plenty of money in wages, and owing the government a lot of income tax as well by all accounts, as an example of what can happen in a range of industries?

**Mr Thomas:** Yes, the only winners in this is the one per cent—the billionaires who are ensconced in their havens. All the money that Uber collects through the app from your credit card goes to the Netherlands, a tax haven. Admittedly they send some back for what they call running their local show but not a lot because their whole business is about avoidance and externalising costs. The billionaires will get their money; the rest will lose ultimately.

**Mr MELLISH:** Mr Dallaston, you mentioned about urban development and links to transport. Do you see that car technology and mobility as a service, if they are done properly, can have a positive impact on future forms of urban development?

**Mr Dallaston:** I think there is a lot of risk in the promise of some of these technologies. For example, the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors earlier this year announced 47 major projects that they want to undertake in South-East Queensland in the next decade in preparation for an Olympic bid. One of the projects they announced—one of their highest priority projects in fact—is a new motorway in north-west Brisbane between Gympie Arterial Road at Carseldine and Everton Park.

One of the justifications they use for building new motorways is a belief that automation technology is going to make these roads more efficient. It is going to increase the capacity of these roads to maybe as much as 2½ cars a second per lane. Overall, it is imagining we can keep pouring more and more cars into an arterial road network and then trusting that technology is somehow going to fix it which I think is a very dangerous way of approaching future transport development.

As far as mobility as a service goes, it depends on what you are talking about. If you are talking about hired cars replacing owned cars—which is what we are often talking about—in communities where people do not use cars very much, where communities are very walkable, then that is a very valid thing. If there were a local car hire scheme in my local community, I would undoubtedly buy into that. If people are still completely car dependent and need a car several times a day then I do not see the ownership model making much difference.

**Mr SORENSEN:** In your submission you talk about taxing retail car parking. Do you consider the bus service is carrying passengers to the last mile?

**Mr Dallaston:** As I have said, the real fix to the last-mile problem is making that last mile better. It is making it more walkable. It is making it more compact. It is increasing density so you can put a bus stop in front of more people's front doors. Retail parking is something that we take for granted. It is something that we assume is just what is in front of a shop—a car park. I do not think there are many cafes in the northern suburbs of Brisbane that do not have a wonderful view of a car park and a main road.

When Westfield Chermide added another couple of thousand car parks a couple of years ago, the traffic around Chermide just went crazy. The intersection of Hamilton Road and Gympie Road is permanently jammed now. Taxing retail car parking is about changing the way people think about how they develop these things—so, rather than building shopping centres surrounded by car parks, we start building shopping centres which are more attractive for local people to walk to.

**Mr SORENSEN:** Do you know anything about the Kango bus service that we have in Hervey Bay?

**Mr Dallaston:** I do not.

**Mr SORENSEN:** It would be worth looking up.

**Mr KATTER:** Most of what you are talking about relates to highly urbanised areas. I make the observation that most legislation that comes out of here is a one size fits all for the state. I do not know, but it quite often has an inadvertent effect on rural and regional areas. When you are talking about that, the dynamics can be very different. Do you have a comment on that?

**Mr Dallaston:** Absolutely. As I have said, I am sure automation technology is going to have some very positive effects in more regional areas. I have spent some time in North Queensland in Atherton particularly. Even in those small towns, people are possibly a lot more car dependent than they need to be. Those towns are very spread out and they are built around cars rather than built around a community. I think there is something to be said for looking at more dense and more walking based ways of life in those regional and rural towns as well as in the suburbs.

**Mr KATTER:** Often that is the appeal of living out there—having a rural residence. That is the only way we can attract people.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for this hearing has now expired. Thank you for your attendance at today's hearing. A transcript will be available on the committee's parliamentary web page in due course. I declare this hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 10.43 am.**