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The Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

Submission on the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015.

I am making a submission in support of the *Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015*.

The change to legislation is necessary to increase the penalties for drivers working for Uber or similar companies as they are not meeting the requirements of the law in Queensland. Uber cars take paying customers in exactly the same way as taxis do and should be subject to the same requirements. The taxi industry, like many other industries, is regulated by the government for very good reasons. These focus on the safety and security of the public as well as meeting service standards.

My parents own a taxi licence. They are ordinary people who bought the licence on the understanding that the taxi industry is regulated in Queensland. My father has always driven the taxi, and it has taken many years of hard work to pay off this licence. It is not right that a large overseas company like Uber can just commence operating a taxi service without the need to purchase a licence.

In addition to having to hold a licence, to operate a taxi requires that all government licensing requirements are met such as the security equipment, driver checks and training and vehicle inspections. Taxis are also required to pay a much higher rate of comprehensive insurance and CTP. Meeting all of these requirements is expensive, but necessary, and it applies equally to all.

Uber call their service ride sharing, it is simply a taxi service by another name. They are transporting paying passengers. Uber technology – an app – is not exactly ground-breaking, taxi companies started using them well before Uber, and taxis are also equipped with meters, emergency lights, GPS, computers, hail lights and radios. Uber are not offering anything different or better than current taxis.

The Queensland legislation makes it very clear that a vehicle taking paying passengers is required to meet the stringent regulatory requirements put in place by the government, whether called taxis or 'share rides'. Uber is not meeting any of these requirements so does not have the same costs and therefore can compete unfairly with taxis. They can undercut taxi fares when it suits them, but when it is to their advantage they can charge exorbitant rates. This does not protect the general public, particularly the more vulnerable members of the community like the elderly and disabled.

It is not fair that a large corporation can just set up business with complete disregard for the law. If Uber wish to operate, then all the requirements for taxis should apply such as safety requirements, correct levels of insurance and controlled fares. Owners of taxi licences who have always done the right thing should not be disadvantaged,

Fines are not enough to ensure that the requirements of legislation are met. Imposing demerit points should be introduced as an additional measure to attempt to preserve the regulations that have been carefully built up over time by government. The government needs to demonstrate it is committed to regulation of the taxi industry, to preserving the value of licences and to the requirements it has introduced.

