

To: **Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee**

From: **Mr Mohinder Singh & Mr Sukhninder Singh Jhutti, and**
Mr Gurpal Sohal



[Redacted]

Date 22 October 2015

Brothers, Messers Singh and Singh Jhutti, co-manage Brisbane Executive Taxi Service (BETS) in Eagle Farm. BETS manages/leases 52 cabs and employs, currently, around 100 drivers, which is not enough to keep all of the cars mobile.

Mr Sohal is, and has been, a Queensland Taxi licence holder for about 12 years. He manages his own car and employs two drivers. Mr Sohal uses, and pays for the use of, the workshop facilities of BETS. Mr Sohal has borrowed to purchase the licence from the Queensland Government.

As individuals who have borrowed substantially to invest in the Queensland Taxi Industry, we are incredulous at what has occurred over the past 12 months, with the rise of the illegal taxi services and the devastating impact it has had upon everyone in the industry. That the Government has seemingly not been able or interested in doing anything to address the situation has us not only in disbelief, but also in dire financial situations.

We ask the Queensland Parliament to introduce measures with urgency that will help to protect the integrity of the legitimate Queensland Taxi Industry, and seek to protect the livelihoods of those of us who have invested so heavily and with good faith in it. The jobs of the thousands of people who are involved in the industry deserve to be safeguarded by their Government and by those who should enforce the law.

Financial Implications

Without immediate action, Brisbane Executive Taxi Service will cease operations within approximately two months.

Our drop in revenue, like that of our drivers, is somewhere between 30-45%. Night-time shifts (and drivers) are the worst affected, and suffering the greatest losses. These falls have occurred over the past 12 months, but the drop within the past six months has been devastating, and is unsustainable.

If we cease operations, this means more than 100 taxi drivers without jobs, as well as six other full-time employees, including four workshop mechanics. We can only surmise that other managers and taxi services like ours would be similarly affected and futures threatened.

Further, this would mean all of the trade we do with other (mostly local) businesses would cease – for example, panel work and upholstery.

Taxi Regulations

We have abided by all of the very strict rules and regulations deemed necessary by the Queensland Government to purchase licences and manage taxis, and we, like all owners, managers, operators and drivers, pay all fees, taxes and levies that we are required to. We obey the law.

Annual Fees include:

- Registration \$7,200
- Insurance \$6,000
- Licence Fees: \$3,000+
- Radio \$800

Now, suddenly, the rules have changed, and everything that we believed to be necessary to own and run taxis has been disregarded by a Government allowing itself to be dictated to by a foreign owned, multi-national company. This is a company that pays no Australian taxes and that has chosen to publically run an *illegal* service. Incredibly, it appears that this company has the tacit support of the same Government that regulates legal taxi operators so closely and so expensively.

There is an enormous, and illogical, difference between what is required, by law, of real taxis and how the Government is allowing the illegals to operate. Illegal taxi services are not just compromising, but ruining the acknowledged high standards and safety of Queensland taxis. They have also made a joke of the taxi licensing scheme as administered by the Queensland Government.

It is just not possible for legitimate taxis and taxi services to 'compete' with something that is treated very differently, with such a double standard and with apparent impunity with regards to its law breaking and illegal activities.

Social Implications

When our families came to Australia, we sold our ancestral lands in India to finance and facilitate that move. As individuals, and as a community, we have brought a lot of goodwill to Australia.

The money we make, we spend on further growth. We continue to invest in Australia.

The devastating financial impact of the illegal taxis will affect our communities at a very basic level, as restricted resources will mean our involvement in charities and community activities will cease. It is not wrong to say that the social structure of our community will collapse.

This issue is not just about taxis, it is much more than that. It is about people who need help.

It is difficult to make any sense of what has been happening with in the taxi industry, and how the Government has been powerless to respond in any meaningful way. The lack of Government action has put at risk an entire industry, and in so doing the lives and communities of the people and their families who depend upon it for employment and financial support.

Ultimately, if the taxi industry collapses, the loss of service will affect many Queenslanders who rely upon it. And the blood of that loss will be on the hands of the Government of Queensland.

We support the Bill because we hope it will give the Government the courage to enforce the law. Our families came here because we believed Australia was a well governed country in which our children could prosper free from corruption. We are starting whether we made the right decision.