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Tuesday, 20 October 2015

Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane, Qld. 4000

Dear Committee Members, ..

RE: Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill

Please find attached, our submission for the abovementioned bill.

You may note that my husband and I were mentioned in a submission by Ms Doreen Awabby. We felt that we wanted our voices to be heard and our opinions understood as individuals.

We would also like the committee to know that we were assisted in our submission by one of our drivers, Michael Longland (the author of another submission). Please note that at no time during the preparation of this submission, we did not discuss the contents of his submission or that of the collective submission by Ms Doreen Awabby.

We hope that the submission will be of assistance to the committee. Should you require further information from us regarding this submission, our contact details are as below:

- Day Phone [REDACTED]
- Email: [REDACTED]

Regards

Marina and Bill Redshaw

Dear Members of the IPNRC Committee,

We write this submission asking the committee to support the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill as proposed by Mr Robbie Katter MP.

Bill and I have been involved in the taxi industry for some 30 years, Bill starting off as a bailee driver. With a lot of time and effort, we worked ourselves up to having three cabs. In recent times, we have reduce this to one cab.

We did this because we are fairly independent folk and the idea was that by investing in taxis, we would be able to fund our lifestyle into retirement without requiring pensions.

Before we go any further, let's be open about our concerns. Our concerns and our experience to date has been about Uber. We have not seen any of the other so called rideshare applications in Brisbane. Maybe they operate differently, but so far all we have seen is a company that simply disregards the law. We have always respected the law and the regulations as set down by the Department of Transport.

We have seen other competitors come into the Brisbane taxi service and go like Blue and White Taxis, Ascot Taxis and in more recent times, Brisbane Cabs. We also seen that due to the way the market works in Brisbane, these companies have merged and been taken over. This is how we understand how the market forces do work in a taxi industry that has a level playing field.

When one of our drivers first notified us about the arrival of Uber about 15 months ago, we felt that the State and Federal Governments would ensure that the new company would be forced to play by the rules. We understood the DTMR did in fact serve Uber with a Cease and Desist Order early on. However we see this was clearly not enforced as today we find that Uber seems to have been given a free reign. For example, it has taken the ATO some 15 months to enforce the GST rules. Each week, our drivers are reporting more and more sightings of Uber cars out on the roads and even on the taxi ranks.

By not enforcing the laws, we have seen that our incomes dwindled and the values of our licenced dropped dramatically. Fortunately we paid our remaining licence off years ago and till recently was still making a go of it. We believe that this has not been the case for a lot of other operators who started to fall by the wayside. We still continue to fight but now find the need the Government to stand up against Uber. Simply fining the drivers has not worked especially as we constantly hear that Uber pays the fines for the drivers.

When the proposed bill was first raised, we were not surprised as we had heard of similar proposals for quite some time. In fact we had been wondering if demerit points were ever going to be raised.

Besides our income and taxi licence values, our concerns are that if Uber was allowed to take over, the taxes and government charges that we have been paying over the years will not be paid by the foreign based company. If this happens, does it mean that the Governments will raise their taxes higher on the local population just to make up the lost tax income?

As for the claims of job creation that Uber markets itself on, we can foresee that with driverless cars which have been approved already in South Australia for trialling, that there will be in fact less jobs. Given Uber's insistence to date to not allow DTMR to independently check the standards of Uber cars, we question how the government proposes to ensure the safety of the driverless vehicle. In fact we question how the DTMR ensures the safety of Uber cars as they are now, given that Uber seems to use Bowls Clubs and Community Centres for the vehicle checks.

As the media has quite often pointed out, it is not just the taxi industry under threat. Hotels, doctors, tradies and others are also facing similar phone app, regulation evasive competitors. The Government needs to enforce the laws before someone gets seriously hurt. Remember we have consumer protection laws for a reason. Similarly we have taxi regulations for a reason. To simply dump these regulations because of a new technology, or because of a savvy marketing campaign seems to set a very dangerous precedent for the future of all of us.

We appreciate the efforts by Mr Robbie Katter to support the taxi industry. We ask this committee to do the same. We cannot wait ten months for effective compliance of the existing laws. Queensland need to send a very clear message now.

Please support the proposed Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Bill.