



YELLOW CABS (QUEENSLAND) PTY. LTD.

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HEAD OFFICE | 7 ALBION STREET, WOOLLOONGABBA, QLD. 4102 Telephone (07) 3391 5955
P.O. BOX 1099, COORPAROO, DC QLD 4151 Fax (07) 3891 0038
website: www.yellowcab.com.au

16 October 2015

Submission No. 250

11.1.10

20 October 2015

Research Director
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

BY EMAIL: ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Refer The Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Act 2015 – a bill to provide for the recording of demerit points against the traffic history of a person who provides a taxi service

Ipswich Yellow Cabs Owners and Drivers supports the proposal to amend the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 (TOPTA)* to provide for drivers who fail to comply with TOPTA to incur demerit points as provided in the proposed amending bill.

Ipswich Yellow Cabs provides taxi services in the Ipswich taxi area. Our fleet consists of 73 cabs. About 215 drivers rely on our fleet for their livelihood.

The taxi industry is an important industry to the State and to Ipswich. It provides important transport services to members of the public (as well as special interest groups such as the disabled, veterans and school children). This is particularly so in regional Queensland where there is often little or no alternative public transport.

Members of the public (and particularly the vulnerable members of the public such as children and the elderly) will often rely on the taxi industry for their transport needs. They need to be confident that certain minimum standards of workplace health and safety will apply to their journey with us.

Our fleet, amongst others, has accordingly put time and expense into skilling up our drivers, through training courses and ongoing driver monitoring, so that we can confidently provide the travelling public with a high standard of workplace health and safety at an affordable price.

The Industry is now faced with increasing numbers of illegal drivers in private vehicles who do not consider themselves bound to provide the minimum standards of workplace health and safety and compliance with the relevant transport laws in the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act (TOPTA).

Our concern is that if this trend is allowed to continue and to increase, then it could result in a race to the bottom – ie, currently law abiding drivers who do comply with TOPTA will leave the industry, because they see that other drivers are simply not complying with the laws. This will, in our view, be a retrograde step – the protection of the public will be eroded.

It seems clear that the current TOPTA laws are not working. And they are not being enforced. While qualified taxi drivers can presently be fined for breaches of TOPTA, experience over the past 12-18 months has shown that non-compliant drivers have simply not been responsive to the imposition of fines alone. It has been widely reported that something in the order of \$1.4 million in fines has been levied on non-compliant drivers, much of which is reported to remain uncollected and subject to Court challenge.

The Department of Transport, who are responsible for enforcement of the Act are no longer taking action to enforce the existing laws.

The end result of all this is that the public are at risk and it is an increasing risk. The more non-compliant drivers who are operating in the industry, the greater the risk. There has been an influx of illegal drivers into the industry who are emboldened to ignore the laws. There has been an influx of vehicles which do not meet the relevant TOPTA standards. In the case of Uber, they are outside the jurisdiction of the State so it is understandably difficult for the State to force them to become good corporate citizens, and so if the State is to protect the travelling public, and to ensure workplace health and safety concerns are met, something else is needed to ensure that all drivers obey the laws and meet workplace health and safety standards which the public have come to expect.

For the reasons outlined above, we believe the proposed amendment to TOPTA to impose demerit points (in addition to the fine) on drivers who are in breach of the laws is one way to place some direct responsibility on the driver's shoulders for their own conduct. Persistent and wilful breaches of the law by a driver may then lead to a loss of that driver's licence, thus removing problem drivers from the industry and ensuring a level playing field for compliant drivers.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Debbie Morrison

Manager of Ipswich Yellow Cabs

