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

21 October 2015

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to express my support for the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015.

We are a small business who has invested in a Government regulated industry since 1995. We have continued to reinvest our profits into growing our business and did so with the confidence and certainty of a regulated industry, working towards providing a stable future for ourselves and our family.

In recent times, the prospect of our stable future has been compromised with the infiltration of an overseas company, Uber, reported to be worth in excess of 51 billion dollars that is operating an illegal Taxi Service under the guise of "ridesharing".

Ridesharing gives the impression of people travelling to or via a common destination for the purposes of allowing the driver and passenger of that vehicle to "share" the costs associated with the journey taken. The business model used by Uber could be nothing further from the truth when it comes to ridesharing. Uber's drivers are waiting for ride requests and do not provide destination details of their passenger's journey until the driver accepts the "hiring", so the fact that the driver and passenger(s) are travelling to a common destination cannot be substantiated. The taxi industry operates by cars being allocated to passengers who require to be transported to a destination of the customer's choice. It doesn't take much to observe the similarity here.

As a taxi operator, I have to comply with the regulations and laws pertaining to applicable legislation. This means I have to install tamperproof security cameras with independent tamperproof GPS tracking facilities, pay appropriate Government licence fees and charges, submit my vehicles to bi annual inspections undertaken by officers of the Transport and Main Roads Department, offer the taxi service 24 hours a day 7 days a week, accepting work within a district initiated by the Department, comply with minimum service levels which are

mandated by the Department, maintain all records regarding maintenance and repairs as dictated by the Department, only use fully trained taxi drivers who have demonstrated their competence by passing a course operated by a Registered Training Organisation, provide proof that my vehicles are adequately insured including Public Liability, have a tamperproof distress notification system that is checked by the Taxi Booking Company at least once a month, outfit the vehicles with distinguishing features that clearly identify the car's purpose and only charge the Government gazetted fare at all times. These compliance requirements come at considerable cost and have been designed with the customer and drivers' safety in mind. Our illegal competitor, Uber, have none of these charges to pass on to customers, and subsequently, are able to offer discounted fares compared to taxis when services are in low demand. In times of peak demand, Uber use "surge pricing" to gouge their customers, quelling demand to a point where it becomes cost prohibitive to use, allowing only the wealthy to afford such service.

Attempts to stop Uber operating has been in vain. Several Cease and Desist Orders have been ignored and covert operations have been thwarted by the company. When Uber drivers have been issued infringement notices, the company has reportedly paid these on the driver's behalf. This situation allows Uber and its drivers to operate with no regard for our laws whatsoever. It is also the reason why this Bill must pass through the Parliament. The Bill proposes to issue demerit points to drivers caught operating illegal taxi services along with existing monetary fines. The purpose of this Bill is to discourage drivers from breaking the laws as Uber may still be able to pay the fines on the driver's behalf, but they will be powerless to stop a repeat offender from losing their licence to drive.

If the current situation is allowed to continue into the future, the taxi industry will collapse. More and more "ridesharing" cars will proliferate and incomes of taxis will continue to diminish. A significant casualty of the collapse of the taxi industry would be the provision of wheelchair accessible taxi services. At the moment, about 20 percent of all taxis are wheelchair accessible, once again, a Government requirement. These taxis are costly to operate, but are currently operated without any Government Subsidy. Their operation is cross subsidised by carrying of taxi customers when they are not required for wheelchair work. The loss of work will have the potential to put wheelchair taxi operators out of business and as "ridesharing" companies do not provide wheelchair accessible services, the disabled community would be severely disadvantaged.

I request that the committee will consider these issues when they making their decision. All we ask is that law is upheld to prevent illegal taxi services from tearing the heart out of a community based service that serves the whole community, not just those with a smartphone and a credit card.

Yours sincerely,



Gareth Hughes