

SUBMISSION TO INCREASE PENALTIES IN TRANSPORT OPERATIONS TO DETER ILLEGAL TAXI OPERATORS

My name is Nicholas Vlandis and I strongly support this Bill of Demerit Points for Illegal Taxi Services. I have been an owner investor in the taxi industry since 2000. All my working life I have paid my taxes and abided by all the laws in the belief that my investment will support my wife and I in our retirement.

Now this investment in retirement from years of hard work is quickly disappearing, under threat from the illegal multinational backed company uber. Our lives today are consumed with uncertainty and worry that what we worked for is not enough.

Our Queensland Taxi Industry is mostly made up of Mum and Dad investors, each taxi plate representing a small business. I am now 80 years old and it would be impossible to start again, it is difficult dealing with the thought of losing our future to, of all things, a foreign illegal bully.

We need the government to step up and protect us with stronger penalties as what Queensland has in place now is not sufficient. For example the "Cease & Desist" order, fines are issued to drivers but paid for by the illegal operator 'uber', they have plenty of overseas money to challenge any legal action. A monetary fine is not a deterrent, demerit points should be attached to all fines, licence suspension or vehicle impoundment should be enforced for repeat offenders. This action, we believe, will make the illegal taxi drivers think twice about driving and charging for an illegal service.

We ask that the Queensland Government take immediate and strenuous action. This is why we need demerit points introduced.

This illegal multinational backed company is a direct attack on our Taxi Industry and many other related small businesses. Uber is unable to transport wheelchair-bound passengers and assist our ageing population. Many elderly people do not have smartphones, they rely on landlines and depend on the legal taxi services. Also, the unregulated apps and illegal taxi service do not comply with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport ("DSAPT").

Also, the small business operators who provide employment and services to keep the legal taxi industry operational will suffer in an already declining economy. Motor mechanics, auto electricians, tyre fitters, panel beaters, even new car sales will all be effected.

I am going to list a number of safety, transparency and other other compliance measures that must be met as mandatory by legitimate taxi owners/drivers as well as substantial financial outlays on training and equipment.....

- Purchase of a taxi licence
- Commercial insurance
- Security cameras
- GPS Location and tracking of the vehicle
- Driver security alert
- Service area restriction
- Police and traffic history checks
- Health checks
- Driver training
- Taxi driver licence
- Vehicle signage and Indicators
- Vehicle safety measures
- Maximum age of vehicle 6 years sedan/8 years wheelchair accessible
- Six month interval for vehicle inspections

Uber tells us that they are safe and legal but they do not have to comply with any of the above measures, how can they be safe if they have no boundaries and no-one enforces the most basic laws to keep us safe.

Insurance, Uber claims that their vehicles are fully insured, all they require is a private class 1 CTP insurance, costing approx. \$325.00p/a. Queensland taxis are required to have class 3 CTP, costing approx.. \$6,500.00p/a. Legal taxis have comprehensive insurance and \$20 million in public liability, uber does not in most cases. I wonder how uber would exist if they were to pay the same high costs for keeping the drivers and public safe?

In my last legal taxi journey I was amazed at the innovative and new technologies on show, Queensland taxis have been operating apps at least 12 months before uber was even around. The process of purchasing a taxi licence is lengthy and complicated, I was under the understanding that by purchasing a Taxi Licence in good faith from the Government we had the peace of mind

that our investment would be safe and our industry protected in the future. There was a tender process advertised by the Government in the newspaper, conditions and application forms had to be obtained from Queensland Transport. Completed applications were sent with deposits to Transport and the highest bidder won the licence.

The operators terms and conditions were set down by the Director-General Queensland Department of Transport but these guidelines are not required or used by the taxi service uber, how is this right and fair?

The emergence of illegal taxis, if uncontrolled, will result in an erosion of the legal, government regulated taxi industry. Hardworking owners like myself who have outlaid in excess of half a million dollars will suffer an immense loss of their assets – a value set by the government. It is the responsibility of the government to maintain the standards and regulations they have set, equitably and consistently throughout the industry. I wonder whether the government will compensate each legal taxi owner after they have stood by and allowed the industry to be destroyed through illegal and unregulated threats.

Finally a plea, this investment is our life's work, a lifetime of sacrifice to achieve a retirement with the peace of mind knowing we will be able to fund any health issues, afford a higher cost of living, and to live comfortably in our old age – not being a burden on society and the Government.

We urge you to support this Bill to protect the industry the Government has created. This Bill is the Government's opportunity to control the illegal and unregulated taxi's functioning in Queensland, please act now.



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Nicholas Vlandis

Nicholas and Dorothy Vlandis