

Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources Committee

Parliament House

Brisbane Q 4000

17 October 2015

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015

We have read details of the above proposed bill introduced into parliament for the introduction of demerit points for drivers operating an unlicensed taxi service, popularly known as ride sharing. We believe this is a reasonable and responsible response to the current alarming growth in this illegal activity and will provide law enforcement with an effective means of policing such activity.

We have owned and for a period of time operated Taxi licenses in Queensland since 1992. In this time we have found the purchase and leasing of taxi licenses to be a sound investment and anticipated an ongoing income to fund retirement. We are increasingly concerned about the likely loss of capital and income of these licenses due to the introduction of the unregulated ride sharing business competing unfairly for the business traditionally serviced by the existing regulated taxi industry.

There can be little argument that ride sharing businesses, such as Uber, provide a service which has traditionally been provided by the taxi industry. Their increasing popularity is driven by the lower cost to consumers not because of the new innovative technology (taxi services already have similar services in place) but purely because this business operates outside the existing laws and regulations covering the provision of taxi services, thus reducing financial overheads.

Regulation of the taxi industry exists in its current form for sound reason. Although adding to the cost of taxi services these regulations have ensured the maintenance of a high standard of service currently enjoyed by this state, that is a 24 hour service in safe, comfortable vehicles installed with equipment which safeguards the security of both driver and passenger as well as the provision of facilities which provide the disabled with an equivalent service to that enjoyed by the general population.

Government attempts to control the growing trend of "ride sharing" operators through a financial penalty have largely been ineffective. Drivers remain unaffected by such fines as the multi-national companies cover these costs in order to keep the drivers on the road. It is interesting to note here that payment of a fine is an admission of guilt. This total disregard for existing laws is repeated with success in many countries of the world and the company pressures governments to legislate in their

favour citing popular demand for the service as the reasons for government to act quickly to legislate to legalise the activity. One would have to then wonder what sort of a precedent is being set when a company which disregards existing laws and regulations becomes a major force in pressuring governments to enact laws in their favour. Further, considering the history of this company's mode of operation its favourable and co-operative response to any type of regulatory measures needs to be questioned.

It is true that with technological advancement, not only the taxi industry but a large percentage of other businesses will be faced with new and largely unforeseen challenges and will need to adjust to more technologically inspired modes of business practices. The government's upcoming review of the taxi industry and its willingness to take time to examine all aspects of the situation that has arisen is a responsible and reasonable response and will likely influence legislation covering new business operation modes in the future. Of course this review is only a first step and the flow on to enacting of any new legislation resulting from this review could be some time away. In this time, the whole taxi industry could be in chaos and many small businesses ruined. In order to expedite the process of review and legislation, defuse the growing unrest in the existing regulated taxi industry and ensure appropriate decisions and policy change takes place promptly, effective action is required to ensure that the existing laws are upheld during this process.

The major multinational company concerned has proven it will continue to disregard laws and regulations in its drive to ensure growth of its multibillion dollar business. The only reasonable and effective measure to curb illegal activity is the timely introduction of laws which affect those who operate outside the law and reside within the state.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it would appear that as proposed, the introduction of a demerit system for the driver of such a service would be an effective starting point to ensure the existing laws are upheld. Considering the power of the major "ride sharing" entity to circumvent regulations, recruit drivers and influence public opinion we would welcome even tougher penalties involving deregistering of vehicles used for "ride sharing" as has been introduced in New South Wales recently. The point is there is a need to protect the livelihood and investment of law abiding citizens operating legal businesses and working in Queensland.

We wholly support the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015. It will assist in creating a stable and equitable work environment for operators and drivers of legal taxi services and protects their livelihoods during the time of review and change.

Yours faithfully