

Alan Austin



20<sup>th</sup> October 2015

I am the owner of taxi plate [REDACTED]

This submission to you and your committee is about increasing penalties to the illegal taxi services by private operators in this state.

I purchased a taxi licence in 1996 for \$208,000 financed by the ANZ Bank, plus State Government Stamp Duty.

I also purchased an almost new Falcon Station Wagon for \$14,500 attached to the licence and signed on with Black & White Cabs.

I already had a hire drivers licence and knew I was under an obligation to Queensland Transport to meet standards required for:

- a. Vehicle appearance and cleanliness.
- b. Mechanical condition of vehicle to be kept in required standard.
- c. To organise six (6) monthly inspections by Qld Transport Officers.
- d. Being a responsible owner and abiding by government regulations pertaining to the industry.
- e. Ensuring that drivers obeyed traffic rules and rules pertaining to the carrying of paying passengers.

The base rules have been in force for many years and extra rules have been added such as green lights, cameras, taxi rank supervision at busy ranks plus airport supervision. These have been paid for by the taxi owners for the safety of the drivers and passengers. Maxi taxis were also introduced to provide wheel chair and extra passengers.

Importantly, government and the taxi industry worked together to establish when and where more taxis were required in conjunction with population increases throughout Queensland.

This system has worked well – government sets the fare price. A move was also made to introduce “Silver Service” and “Business Class” taxis to serve those requiring a better class of vehicle including war veterans etc. and extend the role of this service. The PVH and Silver Service /Business Class have provided a valuable service to the community plus the role of a standard taxi. “Maxi Taxis” have provided wheel chair customers plus the ability to carry ten passengers.

Governments of both political persuasions have set fees for registration inspection fees, taxi fares, driver renewal fees for driver authority.

Taxi companies set radio fees and kept - along with the owner – driver records. There were always reports of “phantom cabs” especially at weekends. When caught they were dealt with, fined and told of the consequences if they reoffended.

Technology for dispatch and security has been progressively updated.

The Newman government introduced new meters and owners will be responsible for new cameras to be installed over the next three years.

Fees to taxi owners – such as annual licence renewal and operator accreditation have to be paid or stiff penalties will be imposed.

Uber came into Australia two years ago and introduced an illegal service. Their costs are much lower than taxis as they do not pay costs to Government. No taxes (GST) were paid.

Vehicles are not registered or insured as taxis are and are illegal. The Dept of Transport has fined drivers and legislation has been introduced into State Parliament to issue demerit points off driver's licences. Uber has been paying drivers' fines and ignoring the rules.

A horrible situation now exists:

We, as responsible taxi owners pay what is asked of us and obey the law. Uber completely ignores rules and regulations.

Uber has "surge pricing" which can mean people paying up to 3.5 times more than a normal fare – for instance – hail storm Brisbane 2014 – people were charged 3.5 times more.

No tax is being paid – uber says GST is the responsibility of the driver.

Qld Transport and industry decides numbers so in a regulated market owners and operators can make a living. Combining taxis and uber cars operators will suffer financially – taxis are made up of small business and do not deserve this treatment.

Legislation giving transport and police the authority to issue demerit points consisting of three for the first fine and six thereafter should be passed by parliament urgently. People who obey the rules should be protected.

Some of Australia's politicians have always said "a fair go". What is happening is the hardworking, law abiding little people are being used and are expected to pay, whilst uber does what it likes and blatantly disobeys the law.

We all know that time changes in technology but rules must be obeyed. The taxi industry must not have to try and exist with illegal operators.

I trust the legislation will pass through parliament. The law is the law and must be upheld.

Yours faithfully,



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Alan Austin