

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

Dear Sirs or Madams,

**Submission to  
Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources Committee  
Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015**

This submission is in support of the proposed amendment Bill.

I am an owner of a Taxi in Queensland. For me, it is my small business and it was purchased at a time when the numbers of taxis were limited by Government, as is the case today albeit based on population numbers and waiting time and other factors etc.

I paid the commercial price for my small business. At the time, I thought I was purchasing something that could fund my retirement as a Superannuation Fund might.

I grew up when indeed, women working for Government had to leave work when they married and also (incl. later) when there was either no superannuation available or women were not eligible. I have miniscule superannuation and the little bit I accumulated when the laws changed and superannuation became compulsory, I spent on making my home safe and some house repairs.

I cannot speak for everyone, only for what I know, and for those Australians I know about and the number is not small, a Taxi Licence Plate is an Australian owned small independent business, or family business, and for me and I daresay lots of owners, the returns are spent in Australia and creating jobs for others.

I borrowed the entire amount for my Taxi Licence Plate except for the deposit and I have worked since then, over a number of years constantly, to pay it off along with GST and Income Tax, with "takings" and with my own wages. Today, I owe approximately \$160,000. The Taxi returns me roughly \$40,000 +/- a little after taxes and expenses and the driver earns probably \$10,000 more or similarly, annually. I know of a number of people similarly placed. I know of many Mums and Dads, ordinary citizens, who own Taxis who either use the income in their retirement or who like one Mother and Daughter, absolutely rely on the taxi income to supplement their pension or part pension. (but, I do not know those personal details).

The impact on my business of Illegal Taxis driving simply put, means less money for my business, and ultimately undermines the Legal Taxi Drivers money because their rightful "jobs" are being taken. This impacts how long it will take for me to pay off the loan. There can also be an impact on persons willing to be Taxi Drivers because of less remuneration (how low can you go?) and on the subsequent loss to the community of considerable essential point to point services that they now rely on. It causes stress to me that the illegal operation is allowed to continue when law abiding, ordinary people are being punished by less work being available. It also stresses me that there can be no checks on the safety of, nor the vehicles being used in the illegal taxi business, such that drivers acting illegally are I suggest,

unaware of the costs to themselves of their vehicle in terms of maintenance. People with not much money might just skip extra expenses for car maintenance as indeed I have done myself in the past resulting in vulnerabilities.

I personally am of the opinion that as reported, the popularity of the use of illegal Taxis particularly with young people, is not in itself saying that people choose those taxis over traditional taxis but is more about that the young, digitally quick people want an “app” which brings instant success and endorsement. It seems to me that if Taxis had been free to develop technologically in that way (they have and still must join Taxi booking Companies), or if a lead can/could be taken then we may have heard or come to a different story. So, the new and modern story is one of Technology and participation in it. Furthermore, it is possible this story could be an Australian one whereby monies stay in Australia for Australians, and also for Australian Governments because, I believe, they have the ability to participate in this. We are all familiar with complaints (some undocumented) both of Taxis (and illegal taxis) of the new era, and I suggest the solution lies in investigations both to enhance the traditional Taxis and also to prepare for the new and coming “Digital Age,” with regard to our future generations.

So how do you marry the new and coming "Digital Age" with the present. Of course, this is a job for Government to ponder seriously and I don't doubt that they will. From Federico Pistono on basic income in 'New Scientist' 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2015 and I quote “It's possible that within 20 years almost half of all jobs will be lost to machines, and nobody really knows how we are going to cope with that. Those who still have faith in technology's power to create jobs fail to recognise the shift to a “superstar economy”, where a handful of companies disrupt markets, make billions and employ very few people, while the rest fight for the scraps”.

As I understand it, Uber International Transportation Company, take 20% off the top from drivers and is based in Netherlands and "Silicon Valley" with Headquarters in San Francisco (clearly based unAustralian) and I have read reports that in the end there is a grand plan to be in a very good financial position to operate the "driverless cars" of the distant or not so future and, dare I suggest it may well be from its base in another country if true. Because they hope to infiltrate everywhere in the future they will gain that control. Imagine, \$20% off every single taxi transaction in Australia gone. Wikipedia: “In 2014 Uber received an “F” rating from ‘Better Business Bureau’ which cited complaints over unexpectedly high charges” in the United States. So, do we really “know” the full story?

Just as the Government has regulated the Taxi Industry in the past, I believe the time to take control is now for the Australian Government and Governments. Time is needed to investigate how we can best serve Australia, how we can update to the new “digital revolution” and its challenges how we can not simply leave the current Taxi Operations there. We can commence this process by endorsing this bill allowing demerit points for offences by illegal drivers, whilst at the same time sending the message to our community that we uphold the law as it stands. More particularly we need to enquire and direct as to how we would like our transportation to look in the future.

The Canberra situation would seem a little bit different. When I lived in Canberra, the Government always had Commonwealth Monies aplenty to build roads, pre-schools, great transport like buses, move people to Canberra etc - a world away from the Australian States and their economies. I assume it is similar today as Canberra continues to be created, it is

totally planned and I think it is a beautiful city. Taxi Operators there have a choice of yearly rental.

So, I think the real problem for Government is how to bring the Taxi Industry into the new technological age, not leaving the Taxis stuck there, and not how to embrace illegal taxis who are effectively using standover tactics at present (operating illegally), with their apparent megarich income base. (It is reported eg Uber International Transportation Company based in US is already drawing up its own rules for future operations some of which are exclusive).

To me, a simple mind, it may well be challenging to police such illegal activities, but if the Government has the power to apply the limit of demerit points to even one taxi illegal event it is possible there will be no more. I have been near to at a Taxi Rank on a weekend and heard One calling out "hey, over here Uber!" How is the ordinary person to know who this person is, let alone take a ride with him.

I think in the short term such legislation as maximum demerit points as a deterrent would work on a number of fronts, it would give space to the Government to have time to prepare for the changes it needs to possibly formulate and effect the future direction of the transporting of point to point passengers; of transporting the wheelchair type customers (my wheelchair adaptation to my Taxi cost in the vicinity of \$15,000 extra to set up), and of using the Geographical technology available amongst other things. We hear complaints, we have always heard complaints about this taxi or that service, we have also heard complaints about this illegal taxi or that illegal taxis surge pricing which cost the people three or four dollars less than a taxi would for the same fare on the way in to the Restaurant but double the price on the way home. (speaking from personal enquiries here). Illegal taxis think they are giving something palatable at this time and tout their popularity based on it being a cheaper alternative but this is not necessarily the case with surge pricing and a fare can even cost more than a current taxi would charge. (and in the future scenario ?). We are used to seeing surge pricing in effect with airlines eg where it costs much less when you buy your tickets well in advance but pay a lot more if you need the service right now. Another example occurs in cinema tickets with discounted prices for matinee sessions. Taxis can't charge more for their services depending on the time of day or day of the week.

No, I think the biggest threat to our Australian Economy is to allow offshore companies to dictate our future by taking control of our assets - our monetary base.

If there is a way for our Australian Industries to embrace new technology then let us first try to reshuffle that with our own rules. Is it possible to keep some kind of system in place so as to maintain Australia's autonomy in this? Why not? I think we must engage real experts in this investigation.

If we give way without due consideration - which is a huge undertaking in itself - it is quite imaginable that we may well find that in the end we are not better off, indeed worse off because surge pricing has delivered us short term gains to gain our favour for control, and may in the end lead to more expensive fares in the case of taxis.

I heard on ABC radio an Uber Representative from Brisbane say, in response to the question of how much an Uber driver earns in a year - no answer to that - but "we are about people working for a few months to save up for an overseas trip, or a wedding", implying the short term nature of their proposals. Seems to me a person could get a Taxi Drivers Licence and do the work for the same reasons and without the wear and tear costs on the vehicle.

Having said all that, I don't think we sell out to something we are not yet sure about but rather, I think we can make deliberate and conscious decisions in order to make a difference. An Australian way. I am reminded of the period in the 80's when I was in the UK and I saw everywhere "Buy British!". Well I say, let us think about our own great future.

In the present climate, I commend this Bill in the public interest as a positive step forward to upholding the law and safety for Australians.

I thank you for your considerations, these are my own personal viewpoints.

Yours sincerely,



Carolyn Miller



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