



Submission

Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill

I would like to express my support for the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill as put forward by the Katter Australia Party.

Being a long term employee within the Taxi Industry for more than twenty years I am deeply concerned by the current situation faced by the industry.

The Taxi Industry is structured and regulated in such a way as to ensure a safe, transparent and efficient service to the community over large geographical areas. It provides a multi-faceted service catering to the ad hoc user, corporate, disadvantaged, handicapped, aged, multi passenger groups and the late night partying users. Let's face it; it is not an easy service to deliver in some cases.

Regulations have evolved over time to ensure this service is delivered in the best possible way to protect the travelling public and of recent times to protect the driver also (i.e. the installation of cameras).

Technology within the industry is advanced in that it provides numerous levels of safety for both passenger and drivers for e.g.:

- Constant GPS tracking of vehicles – even when the driver is not logged in to the system.
- Fatigue management to ensure drivers cannot drive excessive hours
- Security cameras – these often catch outside incidents not involving the taxi but which may be useful to the police.

- Driver emergency response alarm if required.
- Advanced dispatch system searching for closest available car for fleet efficiency.
- A system that ensures local roster cars service outlying suburban areas. This is critical to supplying taxis to areas which often have shorter trips offering less money per trip to the driver.
- Job history retained in excess of three years which delivers detailed information like route taken, date, time, pick up, drop off, km and speed travelled etc.

Legal Taxi Companies offer a variety of ways that the public can catch or book their taxi, including:

- Hail
- Phone – mobile as well as land line. Land line includes phone identification technology to make the booking process faster.
- Fax
- Website / On line
- Free phones from many public venues around the city
- "Cab Call" available from many ranks
- SMS or text message
- Smart phone App

The flexibility and convenience of these options ensures the industry caters to all sectors and age groups of the community.

Uber offers only one technological option of those listed above. It claims to be more technologically advanced than the cab industry and that the cab industry should "catch up". I believe that Uber offers a very limited technological base catering to the smart phone app user only – **how safe are Uber passengers if the Uber driver turns off his / her mobile phone and cannot be located?**

Fare Structure

The current fare structure is "capped" by the State Government. This again ensures that the public are protected from over charging. The fare structure is modelled on the cost of operating a taxi and the rate is automated by the "meter" in the taxi. The fare structure is inclusive of GST as all taxi drivers are mandated to have an ABN and be registered for GST under Federal GST legislation regardless of their turnover.

Uber drivers do not collect GST which not only means they are breaking the law in this respect it also puts them at an unfair pricing advantage over the law abiding cab driver. Price competition is fine when it is a level playing field. **THIS CLEARLY IS NOT.**

Uber has a history of charging higher rates in peak times, i.e. special events like football matches, Friday and Saturday nights etc. **This is price gouging!** The law abiding cab industry cannot and does not do this.

Cab Drivers

The main reason people drive taxis is for money. Often drivers will set a target dollar amount they would like or require to earn for their shift. Once that target has been reached the driver will bring the taxi back to its' base. The owner of the vehicle will look for another driver to try and keep the car working. It is in their best interests to do so. This ensures a continual service to the public.

Uber drivers however working their own private cars would simply go home when they have made enough money.

THIS EQUALS END OF SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

Methods of Payment

The Cab Industry being an established service offers a wide range of methods of payment.

- Credit / Debit card within the taxi at the time of travel
- Qld Transport Subsidy card for the disadvantaged
- Cash
- Account
- Credit card for prearranged travel for third parties i.e. children / handicapped
- Fixed prices based on a fare estimate

Uber on the other hand despite its' self-recommendation offers only one form of payment method – credit / debit card through the app.

Services Supporting Cab Operations

- It is human nature to forget things. Passengers leave items in taxis regularly. Cab companies currently have staff solely dedicated to searching for the owners of belongings. Who would manage this under an Uber model? Or doesn't it matter?
- It is also human nature that wrong things will be said or gestured inside a taxi causing conflict or offense. Cab companies have a system of dealing with such issues. If the State Government believes these issues will not occur in an Uber model they are naïve at best. Perhaps the State Government will take over this task? Uber's current model of rating

the experience and excluding drivers after two poor ratings must be questionable under Industrial Relations and discrimination laws.

In summary I support the proposed Amendment Bill to strengthen the law of the Transport Operations Act 1994.

- The current lack of political will to enforce the state legislation as it stands threatens the existence of the cab industry and all it offers to the community, some of which has been outlined above.
- To allow an unregulated, illegal ride sharing app to operate "against" a regulated legal service and purport this to be competition is a farce. It is an unequal fight where Ubers' major advantage is illegal pricing paying no taxes. The cab industry manages on small profit margins which is being undermined and eroded. **I call this very un Australian and is not a fair go.**
- I believe the committee assessing these proposals needs to understand how critical the cab industry is to the wider community, as well as assessing the broader technologies used by the cab companies over and above the technology claimed as supreme by Uber
- If Uber is allowed to continue causing damage to the services offered by legal cabs, a decrease in service to the community will be experienced overall. Drivers will earn what they require and then go home leaving a shortage of services. Why drive on a Monday or Tuesday nights when there is minimal work? Drivers would drive peak times and congregate at central peak areas to earn what they can, greatly reducing services to outer areas.
- Please understand what is at stake if the Industry collapses. Services and options to the public in its' broad demographics will actually decrease and be very restrictive in nature

Yours Faithfully



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