

22 October 2015

Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George St
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015

The Townsville Taxis fleet consists of 135 licenced taxis. Our company has bylaws which are underpinned by the State and Federal Government and Department of Main Roads and Transport's legislation (DTMR). Our taxi owners, operators and drivers are required to abide by these rules and regulations to ensure that a high standard is maintained. We ensure that the Taxi Operators and Drivers are aware of what their responsibilities and requirements are as set out by DTMR.

The owners of taxi plates are hardworking citizens who have trusted in the law and have without question diligently paid their taxes as their lawful duty. They have dedicated a lifetime of earnings in their investment, as have the millions of Australians who are now entrusting their superannuation to the very same government. Taxi owners, as voters, have put their trust in this government to ensure that all non law abiding companies and people are dealt with by the full force of the law. No organisation should be allowed to continue to operate with little or no fear of retribution from the law in the very same space where others are made to uphold this law.

Taxi Operators, Drivers and Booking Companies are the life blood of this industry, they work together to meet the many demands that are placed on this sector of public transport. The disabled and elderly passengers are given due care and consideration when being transported. Wheelchair Accessible Taxi licenced vehicles are required to make wheelchair bound passengers their priority, the same applies with the transportation of special needs school children. It is heart-warming to see the care and pride with which the drivers handle these passengers, it is these very same people who will be left out in the cold if it becomes an open platform where no accountability is expected nor maintained.

We are lawfully bound by a contractual agreement to provide extensive statistics to the governing body on fleet performance, should these standards not be met, the booking company will be in breach, therefore it is in the best interests of all to ensure that these high standards are maintained.

Passenger and Driver safety is paramount, and adequately maintaining safety standards is expensive and is a large percentage of taxi owners and operators business overheads. GPS monitoring of all vehicles is done by the Booking Company and the Taxi Operator - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year! The GPS chip is part of the dispatch equipment in the taxi and is only deactivated when the dispatch equipment is removed from the vehicle in its entirety. This is not merely a chip in a mobile phone which is easily discarded.

For both driver and passenger safety, all licenced taxis are required to have government approved taxi cameras installed. These cameras have strict specifications that need to be met and only authorised personnel are entrusted to download the images at the request of the Police Services. The data obtained from this equipment is highly confidential and of great significance. It is most often used to assist the police in both taxi and non-taxi related incidences and investigations. The cost to purchase and install government approved taxi cameras is currently in the region of \$4000 per vehicle.

Once vehicles reach a specified age they are required to be replaced: 6 years - Standard Vehicle; 8 years - High Occupancy Vehicle (Maxi). To ensure that the vehicles are compliant and of an acceptable standard, vehicles are checked for roadworthiness and aesthetics by Transport Compliance six monthly. These costs are incurred by the Taxi Operator.

All taxis are clearly marked so that any member of the public is fully aware of what company they are travelling with. As such they can be secure in the knowledge that should their experience not be up to their expected standard or should an incident occur, there are channels to go through that ensure their concerns are noted and duly investigated. At Townsville Taxis we pride ourselves on the many compliments we receive from the general public. We take every complaint seriously and follow policy and procedure with strict disciplinary action taken where it is deemed necessary.

Using a mobile phone application is not the only way for a passenger to order a taxi. We have a local call centre which employs local people and is easily contactable using a landline as well as a mobile phone. Bookings may be made using our online services on our web page, as well as hailing a cab or hiring one at a rank. Whenever a person travels in a registered taxi they are covered by commercial insurance together with CTP and personal accident insurance. As a booking company, we are obligated to make certain that their travels are recorded and noted so that we are able to obtain the required statistics to guarantee industry and government benchmarks are met. We continue to embrace technology and new innovation with a nationwide mobile phone app available, as well as a specific local app enabling customers to track the progress of their taxi and message on approach.

Taxi regulations and legislation are continually amended or introduced to ensure the efficiency and safety of all who travel using this vibrant and valuable resource in the public transport domain.

It is time for the government officials to stop dragging their heels and to enforce the very laws that they are sworn to uphold. While imposing fines needs to be ongoing, the current system is clearly not working efficiently. Currently illegal drivers do not have to take responsibility for breaking the law and this method is not proving to be a significant deterrent. The proposed demerit system needs to be implemented immediately for our current laws to have any impact at all.

Illegal taxi services need to be dealt with accordingly without delay. This is not only for the protection of the many valued Australian taxi organisations who take pride in their businesses and communities, but also for the protection of other Australian companies that are required to adhere to strict legislation such as pharmacies, liquor stores, restaurants and accommodation houses.

Townsville Taxis would like to thank the Member for Mount Isa, Mr Rob Katter MP, for introducing a private member's Bill: the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015.

Yours Faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Angela Rheeders.

Angela Rheeders
General Manager