

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the private member's Bill, the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015, presented by the Member for Mount Isa, Mr Rob Katter MP, on 16 September 2015.

My Personal History

I am a very, hard working Queensland driver. I began driving in 1992 – faced with no opportunities to work following the end of a 'recession' in Queensland; the taxi industry gave me an opportunity to support myself. Every dollar I saved, beyond supporting my family, I saved to purchase a Queensland-Government legislated taxi licence.

In 2008, I applied for a tender issued by the Queensland State Government to purchase a taxi licence. This was not a decision I took lightly. The contract between the Government and the licensee offered security through legislation and regulation. Since this time, these conditions have only been made more stringent; every year I pay more to ensure I maintain the standards set by Queensland State Government legislation specifically for the taxi industry.

As part of my licence I am required to work a minimum number of 150 shifts per annum on my taxi – no one else can do this for me. I do this in spite of my deteriorating health that sees me receiving injections into my spine every 3 months to paralyse the pain. I am also the sole carer for my wife, who has been disabled by a work injury very early in her youth.

This taxi provides for me, my wife and my two children who I am supporting through their tertiary education.

Illegal Taxi Services And The Consequences

During the last 18 months the legal, regulated Queensland Government licenced taxi industry has been under attack as an increasing number of illegal taxis have started unashamedly operating in Queensland. These illegal taxis lime-lighting as 'ride-shares' are facilitated by an offshore company and provide a taxi service taking passengers from a nominated location to a destination.

These illegal taxis have been taking a lion's share of the limited number of taxi jobs by providing allegedly reduced fares. This is ONLY possible due as they do not follow regulation that incurs great costs annually. What's more, they are more expensive in off-peak hours, gauging passengers without regulation.

My annual fees amount to the following:

Operator accreditation fee to Queensland Government \$165.20

Taxi service licence \$ 165.60

Taxi industry security levy \$373.95

Transport Department inspections (2 per annum) \$145.00

GST (per annum) \$1884.00

Public liability insurance \$7300.00

Taxi vehicle registration \$6754.30

These are minimum charges to comply with Queensland State Government-imposed regulations – revenue into the Queensland State Government purse.

None of these costs include the additional fees associated with working for a 'taxi company' or additional set up (security, branding, disability service supplies) and service fees associated with putting a taxi 'on the road'; all requirements of running a Queensland Government taxi licence. My vehicle alone costs \$75,000 to put on the road.

I am now running our services in the same limited market whilst paying these costs and competing with illegal taxis that do not pay any of these fees.

I am previously had 2 drivers sharing the vehicle to assist in the workload. I am now facing the prospect of losing these drivers as they reduce the number of hours they drive, choosing to operate their own vehicles as an illegal taxi service during peak hours. I am forced to continue supporting these drivers as I am unable to find a driver otherwise; no one wants to drive a Queensland licenced taxi due to the reduced income. This has been over 40% in the last financial year.

Personal Impact

The illegal taxi industry has far reaching personal effects. I am personally paralysed emotionally, physically and psychologically knowing that my only life savings have now disappeared. I cannot function without assistance and medical support.

This has placed an immense amount of pressure on my family who also have to deal with the fall out from my state. They too, have to make additional sacrifices, as I cannot afford to support them during such an immense downturn in working opportunities.

Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015

This Bill provides the first indicator that the Queensland Government will uphold the laws and regulations they themselves have set.

This proposal to increase certain penalties in the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, illegal taxi drivers will reconsider the consequences of their action. It will penalise them in a way that they must wear the consequences if they are caught providing an illegal taxi service. By recording demerit points against the traffic history of a person who provides a taxi service without a taxi service licence or a peak demand taxi permit drivers will be culpable for their actions – a penalty that cannot be transferred to another individual or resolved by another organisation.

It is the responsibility and obligation of the Queensland Government to continue regulating the industry that whilst the Queensland Government decides what they will do with the future of the industry.

The Queensland Government set the rules – this Bill helps to uphold the very same.

I bought my taxi licence making a huge sacrifice to ensure my families future. Now I have a taxi licence that with a value that has been eroded so far that banks will not even provide us with any further loans against its value. Worse, I am looking at the prospect of losing my taxi as it is no longer comparable to the loan value taken on it.

I am watching a lifetime of savings destroyed almost overnight. Illegal taxis are lawless, unregulated and destructive to my life and others like me; everyday Queenslanders who are merely trying to be responsible, independent citizens.

I ask the Queensland Government to vote in favour of this Bill. While it will not put an end to illegal taxi operations, it will be the first act that will assist to deter illegal taxi drivers from operating in an unfair and unregulated fashion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mohammed Shahid', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mohammed Shahid