




6th April 2017

Committee Secretary
Public Works and Utilities Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

RE: "Transport and Other Legislation (Personalised Transport Reform)
Amendment Bill 2017"

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to submit the following in relation to the proposed Bill which is to be introduced to Parliament in June 2017.

I am a  (almost ) year old male currently driving for UBER in the Brisbane area. I began driving for UBER in 2016 on a part-time basis until December 2016. I was then made redundant from the fulltime position I held. As a result of this redundancy I then began to drive for UBER on a fulltime basis. At my age trying to find another fulltime position is almost impossible because of preconceptions about my age.

I have continued to pay the costs required by the Queensland Government and GST as required by the Federal Government to allow me to do this. It would appear that now the Queensland Government intend to introduce even more charges to allow me to continue driving for UBER.

If these charges are introduced, it will become an issue for me as to my ability to pay the one off charges and the renewable charges. If I determine that it is no longer in my favour to do so, I shall cease driving for Uber. By doing this, more people will be effected by my decision.

Potential ramifications:

- There will be one less person paying into the coffers of the Queensland Government.
- There will be one less person providing transport for the public within the Brisbane area.
- There will be less GST being paid to the Federal Government.
- I will no longer have an income.
- A lack of income will allow me to become eligible for unemployment benefits.
- The income from UBER related costs as required by the Queensland Government will be outweighed by the payment of unemployment benefits.
- The Queensland unemployment rate will rise. This becomes very significant if 1000 other UBER drivers follow a path similar to mine.

I am wondering why it costs a one-off payment of \$40 in New South Wales to become an UBER driver and in Queensland there is a series of current and potential costs exceeding several hundreds of dollars for the same in Queensland.

These current costs include but are not limited to repeated:

- Regular medical assessments
- Driver Authorisation issued by Queensland Transport
- Vehicle safety inspections
- A new CTP policy payment
- Booking entity authorisations
- Ongoing (I presume) training requirements

All of the above costs are only available at a full fee level. For a person to drive on a part time level, they are still required to pay the fulltime fee.

I believe that it is not possible to legislate Taxi and UBER drivers equally as they operate differently.

In the Minister's foreword (Queensland's Personalised Transport Horizon – Stage Two Implementation), he states, 'we must consider... the safety of those who use these services and other road users.' And 'a greater choice for customers while ensuring safety, accessibility affordability and accountability in relation to the provision of these services.'

Considering this, there are very limited options in many areas to allow for the safe pickup and set down of passengers who do not travel by either Taxi or Limousine. A trip down Wickham St at 3:15am will show a queue of Taxis parked in front of the park opposite Cathedral Place extending all the way down Wickham St to the Taxi rank on the corner of Wickham and Warner Streets in Fortitude Valley occupying a lane which is meant for use by traffic.

Similarly, the queue of taxis at a similar time extending on a lane from Brooks and Anne Streets to the rank in front of the Royal George Hotel at the entrance to the Brunswick Street mall.

And again on Eagle Street as the line of taxis occupy an active lane meant for moving traffic as they queue for the taxi ranks in front of the Waterfront Pier. This also includes their use of Loading Zones.

These three examples hardly support the Minister's comments about 'ensuring safety, accessibility affordability and accountability in relation to the provision of these services.'

The Minister states in his foreword that 'it is more important than ever that we establish the appropriate regulatory frameworks to allow operators, drivers and consumers to engage with new technology and new services.'

Does this now mean that taxis will be fitted with a GPS system which will allow a printed copy of the route taken for a customer? Even if only 50% of the claims about taxi drivers taking the 'long way round' are true, there is currently no method provided to be able to challenge the route taken and the cost of the fare.

Each UBER passenger is provided with this. I wonder why taxis are not prepared to follow suit?

For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that taxi drivers collect passengers in Fortitude Valley to take to Cleveland or Manly. They then drop them at Carindale Shopping Centre telling them that it is too far to take them and then demand an extra non-metered cash payment to complete the journey or they won't take them any further! A very safe thing for them to do especially if it is a lone female passenger at 3:00am!

Another current practice many taxi drivers employ is sitting at a taxi rank with their doors locked and windows all the way up except for the driver's window (down 15cm) to converse with passengers to tell them they will not provide them with transport because their trip isn't long enough. I would hope that the 16 new inspectors for Queensland Transport which the Minister refers to in his foreword will also investigate this illegal activity. It is not an allowable practice under the current Legislation.

I wonder what will be provided to us as UBER drivers in return for the payment of these new and extra fees!

It appears to me that when it suits, we are regarded as defined by the Federal Court as nonmetered taxis. Yet we are unable to use taxi ranks, priority lanes or areas and bus and transit lanes as well as other benefits given to others. The Minister tells us that 'It is not proposed to extend these privileges to ride-booking vehicles due to likely impacts on congestion.' How does he propose to allow for us as UBER drivers to safely pick up a member of the public?

The Minister speaks of 'the creation of a \$100 million Industry Adjustment Assistance Package (IAAP), which includes \$60 million in transitional assistance for taxi and limousine licence holders'. He further states '...over 90% of available funds have been distributed to eligible licence holders'.

I wonder if any of the funds raised with this new 'cash grab' will be used to fund this Package? In addition, I am wondering why the Industry is being provided with this assistance. For more than 100 years they have had no legal competition. Everyone else has had competition but this industry has been an exclusive and closed industry.

Using the introduction of competition is - I believe - a poor excuse and also a discriminatory one. I wonder why there has been no assistance package provided by the Queensland Government provided to any other business experiencing hardship because of legislative changes by the Government. Business such as hardware stores, corner grocery stores, greengrocers, newsagents, hair dressers, takeaway stores, hotels, nightclubs have received no compensation resulting in financial hardship or insolvency caused by changes to legislation by the Government. This does not include hardship experienced by natural disasters.

In reading the Minister's foreword in Queensland's Personalised Transport Horizon - Stage Two Implementation, it would appear to heavily favour both Taxis and Limousines. Many parts of previous legislation have been dropped in their favour

and many changes introduced making it more difficult and expensive to be an UBER driver.

I am concerned for the safety in general of the travelling public. Previously it was a dangerous activity to queue for a taxi. Fights, assaults, beatings and harassment were a regular part of queueing for a taxi as the taxis were unable to cope with the demand. With the introduction of UBER, this seems to have diminished and become much less an issue.

I am not unaware of the issues facing taxi drivers. My father, prior to his death, owned and drove a taxi. I am glad he is no longer a taxi driver as the behaviour of taxi drivers spitting at and assaulting UBER drivers is definitely something he would not have been proud of. Nor would the behaviour of taxi drivers towards the public – short-changing them, driving them the long way, refusing to pick a fare at a taxi rank been something he was proud of. He was a typical Australian who believed in a fair go for all.

There are currently approximately 9000 fulltime and part time UBER drivers.

If half of the UBER drivers choose to no longer drive because of the extra charges contemplated by the Queensland Government, this risk of fights etc will rise again. Public safety as outlined by the Minister will again become a major issue.

I believe that the regulations as outlined are excessive and the costs are out of proportion to what is required. Consider the cost difference between driving for UBER in New South Wales and Queensland.

If they are introduced, I will need to examine the viability of driving for UBER and paying the Government charges against being on unemployment benefits and the Government paying me. Keep in mind that being on Unemployment Benefits would also allow me to access cheaper medication, transport and medical assistance etc.

Finally, I will also have my say at the ballot box. Please be aware that UBER drivers choosing no longer to drive will affect the public who will have to revert to an antiquated and unfair system as provided by taxis will also have their say at the ballot box.

I would hope that common sense will prevail and that the changes suggested are beneficial and fair to all.

Yours sincerely,



Patrick O'Brien.