

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



Submitter: Rob Morrison



Please find below my submission response to the Transport and Other Legislation (Personalised Transport Reform) Amendment Bill 2017.

Following the Qld government's decision to legalise previously illegal practices in the taxi/public transport industry we find ourselves at a loss as to how this short sighted, catastrophic decision could have been summarily inflicted on so many thousands of law abiding Queenslanders.

I refer not just to several well-known taxi companies but to the thousands of small family businesses - ordinary people who worked so hard to create a taxi-associated business or finance their taxi licences and, in many cases, are still paying them off. Many rely on an income from one licence. More than half of taxi licence owners attending owners' meetings appear to be in the 60-80 year age bracket. I am one of them.

In the mid-1980s I bought my first taxi licence for \$83,000 – plus govt costs. As a young husband with 7 children, I had to take a bank loan and work two jobs to make enough money – long hours driving the taxi at night and doing my own and other's taxi vehicle repairs in the day. During the last 30 years I have had to pay an increasing variety of levies and charges to Queensland's Dept of Transport. Inspections of vehicles and compliance with a multitude of regulations applied – even to the make, age and paint colour of the taxi. Over the years I bought several more licences with the bank's help and at present hold four licences – still with a bank mortgage over the last purchased licence.

Certainly by politicians' standards, my lifestyle has been far from flamboyant, as any profit from the taxi industry financed my other interest – farming. A seven-day working week and no holidays are the norm here.

I am 69 years old and apart from a small flood relief payment for farm damage I have never received government handouts that I can remember. It was always my intention to be a self-employed and self-funded retiree – with a pension provided by my four taxi licences in a so called government regulated industry.

I thought I could trust the government to honour the regulated licence agreements – as it was in their interests as well as ours. Now I find myself at a loss as to how this personal disaster happened:

- . I pay my taxes
- . I pay GST
- . I pay stamp duty
- . I have complied with and paid for every new innovation dreamt up by the Dept Transport.
- . I am a law abiding Australian born citizen

. Little more than two years ago I believe my taxi licences were worth \$550,000.00 each. That was the selling price of the last Brisbane licence we have discovered pre-uber moving into Queensland and ignoring all pay-ride regulations.

- Today my pieces of paper - my retirement fund, are worth very little, probably nothing at all. No one, to our knowledge is buying any taxi licences.
- On top of this, for the last four months I have had monthly letters from the two companies that lease my licences advising me that business has dropped so much in the last month that they can no longer afford to pay the contract price for the lease. I have been given the option of either accepting the greatly reduced prices they offer (to date 70% less) or my licences will be returned to me – and it is a certainty that no one else will want to lease them when they can do the same job with any vehicle, no licence to operate, no costs, no appropriate training, nor screening. I am also aware that this latest cut to my income is not likely to be the lowest price offered to me and that I could probably lose all income from these near worthless licences.

So after 30 years I find myself about to become bankrupted by a government that doesn't govern or protect the interests of law abiding Queensland citizens in the taxi industry and I have to ask myself, "Why did I bother to work so hard for so long just to have my lifestyle and future snatched from me by an anonymous bureaucrat? I could have just gone on the dole early in life and bludged on the public purse instead of becoming a part of our Queensland public transport system. My life would have been so much easier and the government would have given me all the handouts I wanted - including the aged pension."

Of course, along with many thousands of other taxi industry workers, it is now very likely that I will be collecting an aged pension but then I have worked hard and paid my dues for over 50 years and I deserve it.

What I can't understand is why the Queensland government would wish to destroy a successful industry that operates under the conditions and guide lines that it lays down and inspects so industriously. I estimate that the government makes many millions per year from all aspects of the taxi industry. Compare this with \$0 from the businesses it would prefer to replace it with. Am I daft, or is this economic suicide?

We understand that the recent Senate Enquiry had no interest in reading, or else disregarded the 500 page submission from the taxi industry and that it will set up a hardship fund of \$100,000,000.00. How can this in any way compensate everyone for the cost of the licences they bought in good faith? How far will it go and how fair is compensation when claimants will only get up to \$20,000 for up to two licences? Some people have borrowed considerable amounts of money to make taxi ownership their main or only source of income. Obviously many people paid much more than \$20,000 for their licences and are owed a considerably higher compensation than the pittance offered by Qld govt. So who will compensate us for the rest?

Consider this, many mum-and-dad taxi licence owners own just one licence and that is their major asset, acquired with bank help. With a threatened income and a worthless piece of paper what increase in unemployment, dole payments and suicide does the government believe is acceptable, balanced against an industry that over many years has put so much money into government coffers?

At a recent owners' meeting one licence holder told attendees that he was now on the dole and expected an imminent foreclosure of his home by the bank. He will not be alone in that depressing situation.

Like everyone else in this industry we are suffering extreme stress every day. It seems that our half century of hard graft has been for nothing and our future has been snatched away – yet again.

You will agree with us that this ill-considered decision by your government to effectively deregulate the taxi industry (a major employer and financial asset to Queensland and the Australian economy) cannot be justified by now allowing:

- untrained
- unchecked
- non-GST paying
- non-tax paying
- often foreign owned companies who have been operating illegally for quite some time, with none of the safety measures forced on the taxi industry to protect drivers and the travelling public (at considerable expense)

to unfairly compete at a much lower standard in competition with the Qld taxi industry.

What else can Queensland's government do to us?

1. They should either make proper restitution to all the taxi owners, whether they own 1 or 100 licences

Or

2. Buy 2/3 of the licences back.

Or

3. Introduce a level playing field by forcing all personalised transport drivers to operate under the same costs, rules and regulations associated with the running of a taxi.

Finally, it should be pointed out every Queenslander, including politicians, using uber- like arrangements should be withholding 48.5 cents in the dollar on any fare charge to comply with Australian law where no ABN is provided.


ROBIN MORRISON

6th April 2017

List of Requirements

1. Establish an independent Personalised Transport Commission with legislative amendment, policing/enforcement, regulatory and policy development capacity.
2. Bailment Agreements must be retained, with the minimum work conditions and standards for all personalised transport drivers enshrined in legislation.
3. Security Camera requirements must establish a minimum standard, be consistent and uniform across all personalised transport providers to ensure the safety of all drivers and passengers (regardless of the service chosen) and to meet Queensland Police requirements.
4. Commercial-grade, anti-tamper GPS units must be fixed to all personalised transport vehicles and be remotely accessible to authorised parties.
5. All personalised transport vehicles to have emergency systems in place to support driver safety.
6. The Bill and Regulation must be fully consistent with all other relevant legislation including, but not limited to, disability discrimination and work, health and safety.
7. All personalised transport vehicles be required to have dedicated number plates (akin to "T" plates), rather than easily removable stickers. Plates to be provided only when evidence of appropriate CTP, public liability and certificate of inspection are provided.
8. Immediately define, and establish appropriate and equitable premiums for, the class/classes of Compulsory Third Party insurance for all personalised transport providers to address continued uncertainty.
9. All personalised transport providers must hold public liability insurance to prevent the State Government becoming the default insurer and to minimise potential risks to the community.
10. In the absence of vehicle age restrictions, establish clear vehicle quality and usage rate standards and hold operators accountable.
11. Increase licence fees for Booked Hire Service Drivers and Authorised Entities to help fund expected increases in regulatory and enforcement costs for Government and to better reflect the level of "trust" being placed on licence holders.
12. All drivers must have an ABN and be registered for GST before receiving a Drivers Authorisation.

13. The Government must establish a process for managing the risks of multiple affiliations by drivers in terms of both “chain of responsibility” and fatigue management. This includes drivers operating across both personalised transport and other transport (i.e. truck, bus) sectors.
14. Fully integrate taxis into the GoCard public transport network in the short-term.
15. Clearly define what constitutes a “hail” and “touting”.
16. Expressly prohibit the establishment and operation of Booked Hire Service pick up/and drop off zones, on public and private land, which represent pseudo taxi ranks.
17. Establish and maintain a register of drivers that have been disaffiliated or removed from platforms to prevent drivers from simply shifting to a new platform.
18. Establish clear and enforceable requirements for Government access to all data related to the delivery of personalised transport services in Queensland.
19. Expressly identify Police Check requirements in the Bill for all personalised transport drivers as part of Driver Authorization approval.
20. Maintain the capacity of the Minister to enter into Service Contracts at their discretion to ensure the Government has the capacity to respond quickly, and at the lowest cost, to changing or unique circumstances without the need for regulatory or legislative changes.