

Ms Brianna Bell



9 April 2017

Public Works and Utilities Committee
Queensland Parliament

RE: Submission for “*Transport and Other Legislation (Personalised Transport Reform) Amendment Bill 2017*”

To Whom It May Concern:

I live with a genetic condition that causes limited mobility, and Uber has been absolutely critical to my ability to independently access my community in comfort and safety.

Before Uber, I would regularly be forced to rely on taxis to get to or from medical appointments, university, work, and social gatherings. I have had taxi drivers refuse my fare because it was too short, despite me informing them that I would not be able to travel that distance myself. I have had taxi drivers refuse my fare because my wheelchair would be “too difficult to load and offload”, despite it being a 12kg folding manual wheelchair that would have taken the same amount of time and effort as a suitcase. I have had taxi drivers reprimand me for taking too long to get in and out of the car, for my wheelchair being wet from the rain, and for fumbling with change due to tremors. These same taxi drivers who think it is appropriate to cover the seats in plastic, use hand-held mobiles while driving, and urinate on my front lawn.

In comparison, Uber has created a model where drivers have their performance constantly reviewed, providing a safe, reliable, high quality service to riders. When public transport is too far away, or not running at that time, I can track my Uber driver’s arrival. I don’t need to choose between handling cash and paying a surcharge for card. I can send my trip status to whoever is waiting for me, which is incredibly reassuring to friends and family who are concerned about the safety of a young woman using a wheelchair. Customer support is readily available, and issues reported resulted in immediate action and a response to the customer.

Beyond all these benefits for the average customer, Uber has also been particularly valuable to me because of my disability. Their specific training course for highly-rated drivers who wish to make their service more accessible, has enabled riders to reliably call drivers who are willing and able to work with them. While Uber’s current lack of WAV is clearly a shortfall that needs to be resolved, they have already taken more positive steps towards making their service accessible to people with disabilities than have ever been taken by the taxi industry.

If cost barriers to Uber drivers are increased, less drivers will be on the road. My best transport experience ever came from a man who started driving UberASSIST because his wife uses a wheelchair and it enabled him to have a flexible part-time income while caring for her. He disassembled and reassembled my wheelchair faster than I do, and gave me my first ever experience of travel where someone didn't view my wheelchair as an inconvenience or something that needed to be interrogated. If large upfront costs are imposed on drivers, I would never have had that experience, and I will be far less likely to get that experience again.

Everyone should have the right to access safe, welcoming, affordable transportation. Please don't take that right away from me.

Kind regards,

Brianna Bell