

*Committee Secretary
Public Works and Utilities Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000*

Dear Committee Secretary,

We are both the public and owner operators of two Brisbane based Taxis Licenses. We are writing to you in relation to the Stage 2 reforms of the Queensland's Personalised Transport Horizon.

Since 2014 when ridesharing companies such as Uber, started their operations in QLD we have had significant impact to our business. Our Loans for taxi licenses and vehicles are in excess of \$500 000. The inadequate introduction and regulation of ride sharing by the government has caused us great stress and subsequently is causing hardship on our family.

Since Stage 1 reforms have been introduced, this has made things worse for the existing taxi industry and stakeholders. With an unfair advantage, ride sharing operators have been favoured by the government and existing regulations have been disregarded.

For the past 100 years, all taxi services have had a government issued taxi licence which has always been a requirement. Now, ride share operators are sharing the same customer base and disguising themselves as a different entity and operating without a government taxi service licence. The Stage 2 reforms that have been put forward are not in the best interests of the greater community and is not creating an even "playing field." It also doesn't address this problem of licensing structure.

In the Stage 2 proposal, the government has not mentioned as to why they are not imposing any service licence fees while taxi service licence owners have paid up to the sums of \$540,000.00 AUD to operate. The introduction of booked licence service licences that are at a mere sum of \$237.26 AUD is not appropriate and does not demonstrate a level playing field which was the government's commitment from the OPT Review which had taken a significant amount of time.

Recently, as of April 2017, a court in Italy has ruled Uber in contributing to unfair competition towards the existing taxi industry. Further can be read all over the internet, Italy is not the only nation to also ban this type of service, Canada, Denmark, France, China, even some states still in USA have ceased operation.

We as operators, have followed all regulations put forth by QLD transport over the past 20 years. Removing current regulations will have a detrimental impact to passenger safety and quality of service. Existing regulations should be exercised by the government and to all personalised transport services.

Passenger safety is also paramount to the public. The improper signage, lack of tamper proof cameras, 24/7 GPS tracking, no easily identifiable registration, improper easily identifiable signs is of major concern. There is no regulation of this with rideshare vehicles and I believe that this should not be the case. Public vehicles need to be easily identifiable for many users such as , firstly, the passengers, the disabled, the elderly , the young and other road users to ensure safety. Having such easily identifiable objects, will result in our community being more safe. Having safety nets in place for both passenger and drivers is also needed due to the day and age of risky behaviour now being prevalent in the community let alone our emergency departments in hospitals.

There is no safety concerns with taxis, with vehicles having to be fitted with tamper proof cameras, services being up-to-date, 6 months machinery inspections, GPS tracking etc and having drivers undergo proper training courses etc.

The number of taxis required has always been reviewed by QLD Transport every 2 to 3 years. If more are required then the tender process should be followed and new rideshare operators should also be buying an existing or new taxi service licences to operate within the areas. ie Brisbane Service Area. If you go to Brisbane City ranks on a Friday night (which should be the business night) you will find that there are an overabundance of taxi waiting over 1 hour to get a fare. Since the end of the 'mining boom' there has been a significant downtown in the economy all over Australia. Do we really need more taxis or Ride sharing operators flooding the roads? Currently with both parties now operating and sharing the same clientele, unprofitable and unviable is two words common amongst the communities.

Uber is an online taxi service in disguise. They take a paying passenger from point A to B - how is this different to a taxi? The idea the driver of ride share only work a few jobs to earn some extra cash is a joke. Many of the share drivers are working on a full time basis. They are in fact taking the work off Taxi Drivers. There are now many cases on the internet online forums, for example, Uber Drivers Brisbane Facebook online page where there is mention of ride share touting, mention of ride share drivers unloading and loading passengers on taxi ranks, also having personalised clientele without using the online booking application which is clearly in breach of many regulations. There is also lack of enforcement from the government which has resulted in this type of behaviour. There is dishonesty amongst the ride share operators and this must be documented.

Ride share operators are also making mention of their wages being below minimum. If this is the case, why is there no regulation of ridesharing. There is also points about registration fees comprehensive insurance fees which are not level with taxi services which are providing the same service. Please also appreciate the fact that Ride share operators are now contributing towards Brisbane's already congested roads, carbon emissions and liability to the public and their safety. Taxis which are already a dedicated personalised transport service, are seen now sitting idle on ranks waiting for work.

Myself, along with approx 2800 Queensland Taxi Service Licences owners are now in financial hardship. I have purchased my two existing licences in good faith from the government , with having set regulations in place to ensure that level playing field would always be upheld and that existing regulations are enforced.

I approximately have a \$500,000 AUD loan which was used to pay for these licences. The income has dropped to a level that I am facing financial hardship and unable to service the loans which is the result of the government's decision to introduce ridesharing services. I am now unable to even sell my business which has had a very strong record for the past 20 years to be in demand due to the negligence of the Queensland Government.

The market is now technically deregulated, and it has not been done in a fair & equitable manner. **The state government has a duty of care to offer fair compensation to the owners for an act which has directly caused damage to the value of the taxi licence.**

\$20,000 to every owner for loss of income for the next five years and \$9000 hardship payments shared amongst the owner and operator is again, a laughable joke and inadequate for a business worth over \$500,000.

The assistance package that was provided by the government in March 2017 is inadequate and falls very short of being fair. Taxi vehicles are now faced with loss of job numbers due to approx 4 to 5 times more of services on the road and also with the economy slowing down.

There has been loss of income, there's been detrimental impact to the taxi industry by the government with **the improper introduction and regulation** of ride share operators. I would appreciate if Queensland Government buys back our licence which is the most fair and desirable outcome.

The State Government has issued all taxi licences and collected large sums of money for some licences and should be held accountable for this current situation. It is only fair if a buyback program for all existing licences takes place and then a start a new unanimous licence category which would see both taxis and ride share services under the one category resulting in a level playing field. It is not fair on taxi owners or drivers who have followed the rules and have done nothing wrong. Please don't punish the innocent 2800 Qld Taxi Licence owners and operators that have done everything correctly to follow the law.

I make a humble request to you, to put yourselves in our shoes with a profitable and viable business such as a taxi has been ruined overnight by the government's decision. The current situation is critical, with reported cases of owners here in Australia of self harm, should demonstrate to the government of how serious this issue really is and the hardship and devastation being faced. This is preventable by and should be corrected by the government with haste.

Please make this decision with empathy, respect and sense.

Regards

Avtar & Manjit Dhillon