

10/04/2017

Raymond Dhillon

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing to you today as a concerned member of the public and wish to contribute towards the potential impact of the Stage 2 Reforms for Queensland Personalised Transport Horizon. I am a public transport/ personalised transport user and represent my family.

From my understanding, ride share operators have their operations in QLD where we have now had a major disruption to our economy, our way of life, our values, traffic congestion, and our obligation to small business owners here in QLD.

Many of these business owners that provide legitimate point to point transport services help individuals, families, members of the population with a disability, elderly, young and corporate clientele travel throughout Queensland in a safe and reliable manner.

I have read the Stage 2 reforms which have been publicly released, and deduced that this is still not addressing the government's commitment towards 'levelling the playing field.'

A private company such as Uber, has caused enormous amounts of chaos around the world. Typing in the word Uber into a Google search can only prove this. This organisation gains popularity from passengers perspective in regards to savings however if a passenger was informed properly in regards to insurance complications, actual safety breaches, fleet of vehicles, how the company is operating illegally across many nations, I dare say I speak for many and would not like to support such an organisation. I also am in a strong belief that any figure provided by ride sharing entities such as Uber is false and there is no legitimate source of information for their company. Their figures are speculative and do not represent the truth.

A company that is using political blackmail is also a corporation we do not need. A company that mocks our own premier and our state values with horse and cart stunts, a photo shopped copy of an infringement notice is very inappropriate and almost childish. A company that has also spammed our email servers with emails not originating within our country also shows desperate lengths companies are willing to take to fool the public. Our state needs to stand up for our values and current rules and regulations that we have invested finances, time and research on to have a winning recipe.

I would like to highlight very important points that our current system has from my understanding as a member of the public using these services and should not be taken away;

1. Legitimate Business owners who are paying their fees and regulations contributing to our state and federal economies
2. Proper licence acquisition as a part of operating criteria within Queensland Service areas.
3. Proper CTP component insurance that protects passengers and proper comprehensive insurances for vehicles
4. Vehicles that are easily identifiable - as other ride sharing companies vehicles are not easily identifiable, This poses a security issue and to a normal bystander, a taxi is definitely more identifiable with stickers, hail lights, number should an event occur and a bystander needs to be called upon as a witness, there is more chance of a bystander recognising features of an easily identifiable public vehicle.
5. In car footage and audio recording. can't be manipulated for either parties and can serve as viable evidence is very much needed in todays climate. With the rise of violence in public communities, its paramount to my safety that a tamper proof and regulated camera system is in place in each vehicle that wishes to rideshare. **Each vehicle shares the same risk and therefore it must be unanimous.**
6. GPS tracking 24/7. - ride share drivers can switch their phone off and if somehow to disable a passengers phone, if a problem or an inquiry is needed, there is no data from the public transport system ie. trains / planes which all have some type of data that can be used for these type of investigations.
7. Vehicles getting regular checks by our own Queensland Transport department instead of companies who are known to be affiliated and biased with ride sharing companies which can compromise public safety.

Licence fees and stamp duty fees have been taken from legitimate taxi and public transport owners , however a company such as Uber, and many others that come forward have not. A lot of public patrons do not understand how a Queensland Taxi Licence is obtained. If our government is concerned about ensuring our deficit budget within Queensland declines, we need to impose the same fees and regulations that are already in our state to ensure there is a level playing field for all personalised transport businesses. This is the only solution to ensure future ride sharing companies are fully aware before operations being in our state of Queensland. There would be end to this argument, and companies such as Uber should effectively open up as a proper booking company in Queensland following current rules and regulations in place with the purchase of a licence to operate and their vehicles and operations / drivers monitoring all be legitimate.

The government has sold these licences with certain restrictions regarding operating districts, amount of vehicles servicing the district and ensuring that there is not an overflow of vehicles that will impact current services and making it sustainable for all drivers. Taxis in QLD have long provided excellent services to all customer whether it be to disabled groups, pensioner groups, Veterans, Business persons or tourists. They have been doing so for more than a 100 years and doing this well. From my understanding, the number of taxis required is reviewed between 24-36 months and this process should remain.

Our economy in Australia , as a whole has seen a significant downturn. Driving past the Fortitude Valley district on a Friday and Saturday night , even any weeknight , there is alot of taxi drivers eagerly waiting for a passenger fare to complete. Airport ranks also full with adequate number of taxis at its disposal. I have spoken to many drivers and it can take over 1 hour to get a single job, with no guarantee of it being a fare greater than \$10.00 AUD. We need to address the issue of ensuring that there are not a great amount of drivers and less patronage in our society and keep an equal balance to ensure it is sustainable for all and that there will be services provided 24/7 rather than just peak demand services. I have also seen touting which is also illegal here in Queensland, with ride share drivers approaching myself whilst near the South Bank rank , switching off the app completely, and offering me a cash price to my destination. Sometimes higher than the original fare or sometimes lower to entice patrons. This level of deception must be dealt with at once. This is why current regulations are kept in place. Can you please let me know how the Government is going to enforce the law with regards to touting.

Ride share companies here in Queensland state that their service is not a taxi. I would like to again re-iterate how they are exactly a taxi service. They insist on taking a paying passenger from point A to B. With locations to taxi ranks, airports, city etc. They squat on taxi ranks in the city and claim that they are taxi drivers themselves. I fail to see how they shouldn't be subject to the same regulatory costs and initial outlays as a traditional taxi service licence operator. There is no way to enforce strict hail and rank restrictions as ride sharing operators have been evading the enforcement as seen recently with Queensland Transport and their monitoring.

Ride sharing companies are also discriminating on our elderly and people with special needs patronage, many who do not even own a mobile phone device, or without smart phone application capabilities or not even able to operate these. We need to ensure that these groups of passengers are not left stranded. I am yet to see a ride sharing driver complete a small fare from the local shops to the local retirement village. These drivers are here to earn the cream of the top rather than provide legitimate transport services to our whole community.

These ride sharing companies have already shown that they do not like to follow any rule or regulation. They continue to operate illegally in Qld until legalised which made no difference, business as usual as they said. Italy is now the latest nation in April 2017 to officially ban Uber and to order a cease operation of its mobile applications. This is what our government must investigate as it can be done and will rid the problem that has been created with unfair regulation and unfair competition and disgusting corporate culture.

If the market is deregulated and licence categories re-evaluated, it should be done in a fair & equitable manner and fair compensation paid to licence owners or a buy back scheme.

I also agree that fares in our state are too high, which has had effect on patronage. It simply does cost too much to travel around Brisbane. This is evident with our taxi system and also our go card system. Perhaps as a part of this review, recommendations could be given to ensure insurance companies and other regulatory costs are not exploiting these small business owners which then in turn, would be passed onto the passengers thus resulting in significant savings. The insurance body also needs to look at how taxis and ride share operators are no different in regards to their risk on our roads. If companies operate legitimately, their costs and overheads would be very similar. We know that this is not the case and this is well documented.

As a driver on our roads, I have witnessed many traffic violations by ride share operators as they have a 'they can't touch me' attitude. I could state many road offences however this is not my point, the point is that they are just as much risk as a taxi and therefore there must be equal amount of enforcement and operating costs in relation to insurance and registration. I am also at dismay as to why us, as the general public, have to pay the same amount of insurance and registration costs as a ride share operator who will use their car more than me and using our road ways and contributing to road congestion which is already high and not have any financial burden upon them. This needs to be addressed.

I ask that you, and the team responsible for the future outlay of personalised transport services take a moment and look at the future of the passengers, families and small business taxi operators that are relying on the Queensland Government to make the correct decision, and humbly request that you don't punish our current system which is operating fine with its innocent and law-abiding 2800 Qld Taxi Licence owners and operators. Our community is more than willing to embrace new technology, but please, ensure any corporation that offers ride sharing adheres to our current rules and regulations and operates in a safe and legal manner.

Regards

Raymond and Kieran Dhillon