




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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**HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (4.55 pm): I stand to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As we know, the most important part of this bill is the personalised transport reforms and the industry assistance package. Specifically, the job of the committee was to make recommendations on the industry adjustment and assistance package. This bill is about giving the minister the power to implement this assistance package in order to get it out to industry operators who most need it and this industry package strikes the right balance between supporting the personalised transport industry through the transition and adhering to our fiscal responsibilities as a government. It is crucially important that we grant the minister the ability to move quickly to shape this package, to make it equitable and to get it out, as I said, as quickly as possible. I firstly want to congratulate the minister for what he has done with this package.

With regard to the earlier comments by the member for Glass House in his speech that our committee made a recommendation which showed no confidence in the minister, that is utterly wrong. Rather, what we have recommended is that we utilise the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority. We have complete confidence in our minister to carry out these reforms in this package and it shows common sense and sensibility to use this authority that already exists. Why not use this existing body to do the work? The other side complains that we employ too many public servants. Are they saying that we need to establish another brand-new authority to administer this package? There is an inconsistency there. It makes me think that they perhaps have something against the QRAA, but maybe not. A measure of the fine work that the minister has done is that he has responded positively to most of these recommendations. As we have already heard, of the 30 recommendations in the committee report, 14 are supported by the government, 12 are supported in principle, two are not supported and two need more consideration. As I said, his response to these recommendations has already been covered here today.

I want to touch on some particular points in relation to the personalised transport reforms. Firstly, it is very clear from the submissions and the public hearings that all kinds of people throughout Queensland, especially South-East Queensland, are increasingly adopting rideshare, and it is not just young people. While going up in the lift to one of the hearings in regional Queensland we asked the young porter what he thought about Uber and he said, 'Yes, I use it all the time when I go down to Brisbane.' I ask members of our parliament to talk to younger people, especially younger members of their extended families throughout South-East Queensland, because they will find that most of them are quite happy to use rideshare on a regular basis.

From the submissions that were received and the hearings that were conducted, it seems to me that rideshare is increasingly accepted within society and embraced by certain people within society. Another point that came through not only the hearings and submissions but also from listening to people is that rideshare drivers are everywhere. For example, during the hearing the member for Southport said that he has 500 rideshare drivers in Southport alone. According to Uber's statistics, it is doing

11,000 pick-ups a month in Southport. An interesting point to note is that the first Uber drivers I met were public servants who had lost their jobs in the Campbell Newman era and I was quite surprised to find out that a couple of people I knew were Uber drivers.

It is very clear that the taxi industry will continue. It is affordable, reliable and safe. It will especially continue owing to the price surging that we often see with rideshare. One of the best things that can be done to support the personalised transport industry is better treatment of the licence holders by the financial institutions. We heard about that in the hearings as well. The way that the holders of these licences have been treated by their financial institutions does not make it fair or equitable.

These licences will continue to hold their value. One point that I want to raise—and we have heard this from the member for Burleigh today—is that this \$20,000 is not compensation. As one of the people who attended the hearings said, these people do not have to surrender their licences. They keep their licences. They are getting a transition payment. It is not compensation. That is a crucial point to make. Certainly, licence holders have indicated that it is really important that they get this payment before Christmas.

It is very clear that doing nothing is not an option. Nowhere else in Australia has done nothing and this problem has gone away. In fact—and this touches on points that we have heard made today—it is very clear that the previous LNP government did nothing and the problem did not go away. In fact, it just got worse. The former LNP government did not move to make rideshare illegal. All that the former government did was send Uber a cease and desist letter in April 2014. The members opposite say that there has been a delay and a shemozzle. I say to members: look at the track record of the former LNP government as well. It did not cover itself in glory. It did nothing. In fact, the former LNP government probably gave Uber some time to establish itself more firmly. All of the major states in Australia have taken action. There are transition packages in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. There is hardship assistance in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. Other states have imposed a levy to fund these packages: \$1 a trip in New South Wales, \$2 a trip in Victoria, and \$2 a trip in metropolitan South Australia.

I say to the members opposite to not think that our empathy is with rideshare. In fact, for me, it is the opposite. The government members want to do everything they can for those Queenslanders who have done everything right, who have struggled to buy one or two taxi licences over the years, who have worked hard into their retirement years and have treated their taxi licence as a form of superannuation hoping that, when the time comes, they can sell off their licence, pay out the loan and then have some left over. These are working-class people with a giant work ethic who are proud of looking after themselves and their families.

I have met a migrant family from North Lakes—an older man and his wife—who put everything they had over 30 years into getting one licence. Their son came along to interpret for me as they told me what they had gone through. A lady from Rothwell came to see me. She has two licences. She is widowed and looking after two grandchildren. This lady has been in the industry for 40 years. Those taxis have put bread on her table. She wants to retire and sell those licences. I pay tribute to these taxi families in Queensland and in the electorate of Murrumbidgee as well.

I also thank the taxi operators in places like Clermont and Emerald. They are the backbone of public transport in these towns and they are dedicated to their community. They are the only ones who will go out to pick up people on slow nights. If people are looking for a ride home at 1 am on a Wednesday, they can rely on a taxi. That is why we need to get this legislation passed so that we can put money in the hands of these taxi families. We need to take action. We cannot delay. We need to pass this bill. If the members opposite want a level playing field, they need to support this bill and I am glad that that is being done. I commend this bill to the House.