




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2016

### **TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (TAXI SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (8.41 pm): I rise to speak in support of the intent of the bill and in support of the amendments foreshadowed by the Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games. Taxi services are vital to my community. They provide an important service across my electorate. From doctors appointments, shopping or nights out, our local taxis service a broad section of the bayside—young, old and everyone in-between—and they do an outstanding job. Transport services should be safe for everyone who uses them, as well as the drivers who provide these services. Passenger and driver safety is a priority of this government.

There are numerous safety requirements that authorised providers of public passenger services must comply with to ensure Queensland passengers are safe. There are rigorous processes involved for accreditation and authorisation which are in place to ensure the safety of passengers and drivers alike. There are more than 2,700 operators who are accredited to operate taxi services in Queensland. I have met and spoken with many of my local owner-operators and drivers in the bayside who comply with these requirements, and I want to outline some of these requirements to the House. Accreditation includes passing an initial criminal history check, and currently there are more than 15,000 drivers authorised to provide taxi services in Queensland. An authorisation includes passing an initial criminal history check and then ongoing checks on a daily basis.

Further, all drivers must pass national minimum English speaking standards and have knowledge of destinations and roads in areas and must complete driver training courses. The drivers must display a driver identification display card that includes the driver's photo, name and driver authorisation number. Taxis must comply with vehicle design and safety standards and must have duress alarms and be equipped with security cameras. These vehicles also have built-in GPS systems and can be tracked and they must pass a certificate of inspection every six months conducted by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Taxidriver must have a zero blood alcohol limit and must not be under the influence of drugs and fatigue management practices apply to taxidriver.

As I have indicated, this fairly rigorous and stringent process is a requirement for each and every accredited and authorised taxi and driver. There is also great work that the taxi industry has done to contribute to the community. For example, to help reduce alcohol fuelled violence in taxi queues in late-night entertainment precincts, 27 secure taxi ranks operate in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Ipswich. Secure taxi ranks are supervised by rank marshals and security guards and ranks are equipped with CCTV and, in most cases, safety barriers. The secure ranks operate on a Friday and Saturday night and for special events such as concerts and football matches. The government also contributes over \$800,000 each year towards the cost of operating secure taxi ranks in key entertainment precincts throughout the state.

The emergence of illegal taxi services like those provided by Uber has created challenges for the government and the Queensland taxi industry. The government's response was to undertake immediate action to enforce compliance with existing regulatory requirements that apply to all legal providers of public passenger services. A cease and desist order was issued to Uber, yet illegal taxi services continued to operate. Contrary to the member for Indooroopilly's comments, enforcement continues today. In fact, more than 18,278 hours of compliance activities have been carried out as at 4 April 2016. Some 530 drivers have been issued with penalty enforcement infringement notices, with 440 of these being repeat offenders. Some 17 drivers have had their penalty infringement notices waived and 189 drivers elected to have the matter heard in court. In total, penalty infringement notices issued are valued at over \$1.7 million, with almost \$1.5 million already paid.

Compliance efforts have been hindered by avoidance tactics of Uber drivers and limitations and complexities within the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. The proposed amendments to the bill will enhance enforcement efforts, increasing the deterrent effect of the offence by increasing the maximum penalty from \$18,848 to \$23,560—that is, from 160 penalty units to 200—and the infringement notice fine from \$1,413 to \$2,356. It will also include widening the powers of transport inspectors by allowing them to request a person to give certain information if they suspect an offence has been committed and allowing them to request a person to produce a driver's licence if they reasonably suspect that a person has committed or is committing an offence. Collectively, these changes will allow the government to more effectively enforce the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 as it applies to the provision of illegal taxi services.

There is a wealth of opportunity surrounding innovation with regard to the OPT review and Queensland has a real opportunity moving forward with innovation. I know that the current OPT review headed by Jim Varghese is aware of these opportunities and the innovation paper was the first major paper released in March. At the heart of this paper is five components that look at a wide range of topics and opportunities—gamification for transport, the sharing economy, autonomous vehicles and the transition arrangements from interstate reviews. The report looks into these major upsides and downsides of the current key transport trends and focuses on the sharing economy and the role of government within it. Innovation is important.

I can remember a time when the internet and internet shopping did not exist. That is showing my age! However, when this service became available, there was a huge amount of concern from retail outlets that this disrupter would destroy the retail sector. However, we know that that is not the case. The retail industry has survived online sales and many have gotten on board and also offer online stores now. However, innovation does not make improper actions legal.

I recognise the outstanding work that the taxi industry does, the commitment from owner-drivers and the owners who provide an important service to our community within legal parameters. I am very fortunate in the bayside to have a sensational group of fantastic taxi providers who look after my community, who take care of the elderly, who drive them with care and thought and concern, who look after the people with a disability and provide that service after-hours, in the dead of night, whenever it is required and I know that my daughter and my son are safe when they get into a taxi. I support the intent but not the substance of the bill and support the foreshadowed amendments to the bill.