




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2016

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

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (4.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There are two parts to this bill. I do not intend to make any comments in relation to the heavy vehicle provisions. I would rather talk about the reforms to the taxi industry, which is a key issue in my electorate of Burleigh, on the Gold Coast in general and in fact in South-East Queensland—and it will eventually spread to the rest of Queensland.

While I support the intent of the bill, this bill does not go far enough in levelling the playing field. I would rather that we did not need to debate this bill. I would rather that the disruptive technology was not in place as it is now and that the taxi industry went on doing exactly what it has been doing for years. Admittedly, the taxi industry did need a little bit of a kick—we all know what the issues in the taxi industry were—but I think this is too big a kick to the people who have invested in the taxi industry, for those mums and dads and businesses that have put their life savings into something we as a government sold them, after all.

Mr Deputy Speaker Millar, as you would know full well, being a member of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee that considered the Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill, which related to penalties in relation to the taxi industry, we spent a lot of time travelling around Queensland and talking to various taxi groups—on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and a few other places. We heard in those discussions that these people have taken the government at face value and many have spent their life savings. On the Gold Coast, for instance, a taxi licence may have cost \$500,000. Licence holders may have had that licence for a while and they may have earned a fair bit of money from it, but they paid that amount initially. With the advent of this disruptive technology—ridesharing schemes such as Uber—obviously the value of those licences has fallen dramatically. Taxi licence holders now cannot sell those licences as, quite simply, nobody wants to buy them anymore. If taxi licence holders can sell a licence, the selling price is significantly lower than the purchase price. This is all about property rights. My core values and the core values of those on this side of the House—

Mr Costigan: It is in our DNA.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr HART: I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. I am not sure whether he has been warned yet, but I do know that the member for Logan has been warned. I hope that he will not interject much more, because his interjections are not being taken because they are frivolous and a waste of time.

It is really important that in the future services are available for people who want to get from A to B in a car—some form of public transport or ride service such as a taxi. I have grave concerns that disruptive technology such as that used by Uber, which will not necessarily play fair or play by the rules, will lead to the decimation of the taxi industry. What will we do if we need to get from one place to

another in a taxi but there are none left because they have gone broke? It is okay for some members on the other side of the House to shake their heads and disagree with me, but I wonder how many people they know who have put their life savings into the taxi industry, and all we can offer them in return is \$20,000 for that investment—and then we cap it at two.

I fully support the amendments that have been foreshadowed by the shadow minister. He does care about the taxi industry, about what is fair and right, about the effect of the change to property rights on these people and about what governments do in terms of sovereign risk and so on. This is another form of sovereign risk: changing the rules to the detriment of someone who has put their life savings into something, having taken the government at face value.

One day my wife came home in tears. She had been out playing golf in the Currumbin Valley with Shady Ladies. She told me about one of the people she was playing golf with—an older lady whose husband was sick. They had put their superannuation savings into two taxis and had almost a million dollars tied up in them. They were fretting because they could see the devaluation of the assets and were worried that they would not have money to live on in the future. Since then, unfortunately that woman's husband has passed away—he was doing all of the business dealings—and she is now left with taxis that she cannot sell, she is no longer getting the income she was getting from them and she has basically lost her superannuation. It is okay to smile and laugh about that—I am happy that no-one on the other side of the chamber is doing that at the moment—but it is very important that we realise that the decisions we take in this place on a regular basis affect the people outside this place. They affect people's livelihoods and they affect how they survive in the future.

I understand that the minister is considering various changes to this legislation. The committee made 29 recommendations and I note that the minister has accepted quite a few of those. It is very important that we look at the compensation level. It is very important that every person who has spent money on taxi licences is able to get some money back in the form of compensation.

I have had numerous conversations with people on the Gold Coast. I will not name as many people as the member for Whitsunday did in his contribution, but I mention the girls at Professional Taxis whom member for Southport mentioned: Sacha and Zara. They have been to my office numerous times. They have met with numerous people on this side of the House and, I am sure, on the other side of the House in relation to the issues they face. They own something like 35 taxis. This change will have a dramatic effect on them in terms of lost income, yet they will get only two lots of \$20,000 as compensation. You may as well give them nothing. I also mention Shane Smith, who runs First Class Taxis in my area. We on the Gold Coast are a little spoiled because our cabs do not have the sorts of issues affecting some of the cabs in Brisbane. We have nice, clean cabs. We have drivers who know where they are going and who are very courteous and nice to people. I have also met several times with Gold Coast Cabs.

All of these people understand where we are going in terms of disruptive technologies and the effect those technologies will have on their businesses. All they want is a level playing field when it comes to CTP, cameras in cars, licences and the amount of money that is paid by taxi operators. I ask all members to understand the situation these people are in. This is as a result of something we did to them and are doing to them. It is a real shame that the parliament did not get a chance to debate the changes that were made right at the start to put this in place. We will get to debate the regulation when it comes, but it is very important—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member has had several warnings. He continues to frivolously interject. It is very important that we take all of those things into account.