




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2016

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (8.15 pm): It is a great honour to be here tonight to stand up for the small business owners of this state and this country. I acknowledge the service that they provide—a wonderful transport service that is legal and regulated. They do a wonderful job, year in and year out. It has also been good to be part of putting this bill together—as a KAP member—to protect our taxi industry.

The Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015 is not about denying companies access to enter the taxi market in Queensland. It was also never to be an anti-Uber bill. From the beginning this bill was about ensuring that there was a fair and level playing field for the taxi industry.

This bill seeks to introduce demerit points targeting illegal taxi operators and, therefore, deter noncompliance with the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. Last year the state government issued 1,500 infringement notices to Uber drivers. That was the transport department not really even making an effort, so honourable members can imagine how many illegal taxi operators are out there in this state. It is unbelievable that this has been allowed to get this far. The sad part is that we have seen many good taxi businesses that have paid over \$500,000 for their licences almost wiped out. I am hoping tonight that we can save and protect the taxi industry from illegal operations.

Illegal taxi operators erode the integrity and the viability of the taxi licensing scheme administered by the Queensland government. This threatens the standard and safety of taxi services across this state. It is evident that the existing penalties are not sufficient to deter the increase in illegal taxi services in Queensland. Letting this continue would mean that the government would undermine its own revenue base and its own legislation.

Illegal taxi services are operated by large multinational, transnational corporations that do not pay GST. The small Australian retailers pay up while Uber profits go overseas. The taxi industry, however, provides \$90 billion in GST to the Commonwealth government. What does Uber pay? Nothing; their profits go overseas. Those who have purchased taxi licences are finding that their licences are becoming significantly devalued and worthless.

I want to talk up the taxi industry. I hope that we can nail illegal taxi operators and bury them in a coffin. I really want to see that. This is about their superannuation. All their life savings have been put into this. If illegal taxi operations are allowed to continue in this state, there is going to be no superannuation for these taxidrivers. No wonder I am fighting and they are fighting—I hope we are all fighting—to stamp out illegal taxi operations in this state.

Taxis are legally required—and this is the difference that is so important—to provide a community service obligation, CSO, and provide transport for over one million wheelchair bound passengers per annum. If the taxi industry is deregulated this will significantly deplete transport options for those with disabilities and they are packing death. Taxis are required to have GPS tracking devices, pay levies for taxi ranks and have compulsory third-party insurance, fitted cameras, rolling 24-hour criminal checks

on drivers and fatigue management policies. The average cost of a taxi licence is \$480,000 to \$500,000. Uber pays nothing, yet we are asking the taxi industry—which must comply with these regulations—to compete. The committee heard evidence in Townsville that all taxidrivers must have criminal history checks and that they are constantly checked, whereas Uber drivers are not. Children and schoolkids are being picked up by people whose criminal history has not been checked. We do not know who they are or where they are from. Naturally it is going to be cheaper to use Uber if we are not paying for all of this and we do not have to factor in the cost of regulation.

As a parliament we are here to protect the small business owners, who are the backbone of this country, and help them out. We should not look at this from the political side of it, the stupidity of it or the number of votes in it; it is all about doing what is right. That is the reason we were elected to this parliament. I admire the member for Mirani, who said that he did not support profits going overseas—he supports Queenslanders. I reiterate what is contained in the committee's report on pages 6 and 7. It states—

A large number of taxi industry stakeholders provided evidence that the cost of compliance with Queensland's regulations are high and non-compliance provides ride sharing services with a competitive advantage. Many submitters alluded to the fact that they are not against competition—

they all welcome competition—

in the industry but support competition being on a level playing field cost—

we do not have a level playing field here—

where all participants are required to abide by legislated regulations, particularly those relating to safety, insurance, licencing and taxes.

...

CABS 2000 Pty Ltd provided a detailed list of the elements of Universal Service Obligation (USO) whereby the taxi industry is required, through its agreement with the Queensland Government—

They have an agreement with the Queensland government. Does Uber have an agreement with the Queensland government? Do illegal taxi services have an agreement with the Queensland government? Page 7 of the committee's report continues—

... to provide an accessible service to the community all of which add a cost to providing the taxi service. Elements of the USO include:

- *Maintenance of a network of call centres and lost property services*
- *Services specifically for the sick, elderly and disabled—*

Does Uber do that? No. It continues—

- *Operating in areas not serviced by traditional public transport*
- *On-demand service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year*
- *Strict safety requirements, including for taxis operating in large service areas, GPS locators, security cameras; payment of a security levy to the State Government*
- *Provision of receipts on request*
- *Age limits on vehicles (currently six years, or eight for wheelchair accessible vehicles)—*

I appreciate what you said, Minister, with regard to the moratorium. It continues—

- *Drivers to pass criminal history checks, meet licence requirements and complete driver training*
- *Methods of dealing with customer complaints*
- *Insurance costs and requirements.*

Who is picking up our children? We do not know who they are, but these drivers up here have criminal history checks. This is why this is so serious. At the hearing in Townsville Mr Thatcher said—

I am an owner/operator within the Charters Towers service area. I also manage Gold City Cabs in Charters Towers ...

I just want to make the point that it is not so much Uber that is the issue but illegal taxi services ...

I just put a new wheelchair vehicle on the road. There was no change out of \$83,000.

They are going to lose that service—

*(Time expired)*