




Speech By
Tarnya Smith

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2016

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

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (8.03 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. One of the roles that I take very seriously as an MP is to represent my constituents. For the last two years I have had a number of local residents who are also taxi owners come to see me to discuss the transformation of the taxi industry. The one thing that has come through very, very clearly with the numerous constituents that I have met with is their feelings of distress and despair.

There are 3,000 small business owners who say they are being treated unfairly and it is completely out of their hands. They are watching their once-prosperous businesses slowly slip away with Uber entering the market. The question they ask me is why is this happening when they have complied with all the laws, regulations and requirements and they have paid the fees that are required of them. They are people who are doing the right thing, yet they feel that they are being punished and penalised. They have asked why is it when they are doing the right thing that another force can enter the market and not have to pay the fees, not have the vehicle checks and the licences and be able to operate and take their business and the government stands by and does nothing.

I can understand that. It is very much like, as I said last night, having your own butcher store and complying with all the regulations, rules and the food safety aspects only to find on a weekend someone pulls up with a truck and sells a few cartons of meat out of it, undercutting me because they do not have all those overheads. This is exactly what has occurred in our taxi industry. Uber has come in and we now have to deal with it.

Last night the minister introduced the Industrial Relations Bill. Part of that bill was about fairness and balance. What I am genuinely asking is is this bill that is being introduced and its requirements fair and balanced for people who are workers, small business owners, who have absolutely done the right thing for all these years? They have invested and paid money for their cabs at prices that the government set and then another player comes into the market illegally.

Mr Power interjected.

Mrs SMITH: I will take that interjection. I am talking about small business owners regardless of what we did or did not do.

Mr Furner interjected.

Mrs SMITH: That flippant attitude shows a blatant disregard for people.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for Ferny Grove, if you have some brilliance to dazzle us with you might do it from your own seat.

Mrs SMITH: People paid the price the government set the licences at, they paid the fees the government regulated, and then a new market force comes in, it is not a level playing field, and they are now sitting there watching that investment become worthless. It is not like it was on the stock market,

it was completely government regulated. They have seen their income drop month after month after month. They are in a world of pain. People are losing their homes and some have lost their lives. Because of the delay of a year, which has been managed appallingly, people were left in limbo. People now have this debt. They had hoped for an income they should have been assured of, but it has slipped away. They are now working two jobs.

Last week I was in Sydney. A lot of the changes that have been proposed come from New South Wales. I was talking to a gentleman and I asked him how Uber had affected the taxi industry in Sydney. He works five days a week at the Ashfield council and he said he used to do two days a week as a cab driver. He has had to increase that now to four days a week to make the same money. Only a couple of weeks ago I spoke to a woman in Townsville. She said that on some days she earns only \$166, which she has to split with the owner.

A government member interjected.

Mrs SMITH: A lady at Townsville told me that.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for Logan, I seriously suggest that you cease your interjections.

Mrs SMITH: As I was saying, drivers come to my office. David Hooks, who owns Western Suburbs Taxi Depot, has 150 families working for and relying on him. Greg Rudd and Greg Parker come in to speak with me. Many of them come in to speak with me. A lot of those gentlemen are in their 50s, 60s and 70s. The taxi industry provides their livelihoods. It is their profession. It is their licences. At the end of the day, those people are workers. They are small business owners. This shows such a lack of respect. They say, 'You have done this' and 'You have done that', but what about those people? Why are they doing the same thing? They are workers. They are out there at night, taking home your nurses and your doctors—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, you have had a really good go.

Mrs SMITH: I cannot see the difference in this treatment. The LNP is not adverse to competition, but we do believe that safety is paramount and that has not been addressed. We believe in property rights. We certainly believe in fair competition. I suggest that if people in this House honestly care about working families, if they honestly care about 3,000 business owners and if they honestly believe those people have been fairly treated—and they know they have not—they would be prepared to accept the proposed amendments that have been thoughtfully considered by our shadow minister. I urge all members to support the amendments proposed by the shadow minister.