




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION (PERSONALISED TRANSPORT REFORM) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (7.47 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Transport and Other Legislation (Personalised Transport Reform) Amendment Bill 2017. I often get asked by journalists and the media, ‘Why the hell are you guys talking about taxis so much?’ There are 30-something taxis in my electorate and probably not many more in the member for Dalrymple’s electorate. The answer is that it offends me to my core the way this industry has been encroached upon or invaded by this global company that has muscled its way into our market. We cannot debate this bill without considering the way that it has operated and come into this space and that we are now reacting to and that was the genesis of this bill before the House. It still insults me the way it has treated our laws in this state and the way it has treated this parliament.

It is a good time to reflect on the fact that while that company was operating illegally in this state it was blocking the phones of Department of Transport officers so they could not issue fines. It was stopping them from doing their job with regard to the laws that we make in this House. We have sat by and watched them and let them get away with that. The bill that we introduced into the House was a pretty discreet way of dealing with the issue in terms of demerit points, but that bill did get up because this House voted it down. That bill went some way in an attempt to put some fairness back into the system, but it is on the record that this House voted that bill down.

We are now trying to tidy up some of those issues. I acknowledge that the minister has made an attempt to address some of the issues, but we all know that there is a public yearning and fervour—almost an ideological zealotry—to deregulate everything, that everything new is good, that anything that is regulated must be bad and, therefore, we will get rid of it. Sadly, people have not considered the consequences of that. Many consumers are not properly informed of the safety and security measures that are contained in the regulations. Those regulations have been put in place over the years to protect customers from being ripped off on pricing and to keep them safe. It is not so much in this parliament, but so many people celebrate the fact that this new, swanky industry has been developed. All it is is an app that has helped Uber bypass regulations that were set up to create a functional transport industry that was doing its job.

Over time, many people invested in that transport industry because they believed that it was a good, decent industry. They believed that governments in this state looked after small business and that their interests were protected. An \$80 billion global company comes in and we just let them go on their merry way and smash the capital value of these people’s investment. Uber bulldozed its way into the market, consumed all of that capital value and repatriated it overseas so as to avoid paying tax in Australia. We in this state seem to have celebrated that—that we can let all of our Queensland businesses fall over. That started in this House when our bill that related to demerit points was voted down. We told Queensland businesses and mum-and-dad operators then, ‘We’re not going to back you.’ Tonight, the KAP—the member for Dalrymple and I—will move amendments that were formulated

with input from the Taxi Council. I understand that the government has tried to address some of the concerns of the Taxi Council with its legislation, but it does not go far enough. The amendments that the KAP will move later bring true fairness back into the industry.

It offends me to hear members talk about fairness when, with this legislation, it is not really what is happening. At the moment, there is no fairness. Tonight, we have heard members acknowledge that Queensland owned businesses are going down the toilet. All of that business is going into the hands of an \$80 billion multinational company. I encourage members to have a good think about the KAP's amendments. We are giving the House an opportunity to back what the Taxi Council has recommended on behalf of its drivers so that we can deliver fairness.

These amendments do not overstep the mark. All we want to do is make sure that people benefit from security cameras in taxis—which they have had for the past 30 years—24-hour rolling security checks on drivers, mandated wheelchair accessible taxis, regulated wages for the drivers and regulated pricing so that they do not get ripped off by surge pricing. People have become accustomed to that. Five or 10 years down the track we do not want people saying, 'Actually, it was pretty good how it was before. We wish someone had acted like a grown-up and given us a bit more guidance, because we were not well informed.' We in this House are well informed. We know the level of safety and security that is needed in the marketplace. With this legislation as it is now, that will not happen.

I want to talk about regulated wages. A big part of the ridesharing market is this appetite for getting rid of all regulations—and, in some cases, that is a virtue; that has its place. There is a public fervour that Uber is fantastic, that it is a cheaper product because it bypasses all of those pesky regulations that the government put on taxis. One of those regulations relates to wages for drivers. I find it ironic—if it were not sad, it would be funny—that Uber now has a union of drivers calling for regulated wages. We are seeing the birth of a new taxi industry in the ridesharing industry. However, this is really nothing new. This occurred in the taxi industry 30 years ago. In the next 30 years we are going to keep adding regulations, like we are doing now, to these ridesharing apps to provide the same security and service standards that we have now in a taxi industry that we take for granted. We are also recapitalising the value of Queensland businesses because this multinational company barged its way in.

Without these amendments, this bill will fall short of the fairness test. This \$80 billion multinational company has come into our state and disregarded the laws that we have made in this House. We do not matter, because that company has \$80 billion. Uber will do whatever it wants to do in the marketplace. It will completely disregard our laws. Uber will block our transport officers from doing their job in trying to find drivers who are operating outside the law.

Uber knew that it was going to win the fight in this House and that the regulations were going to go in its favour, but it could not wait for that. Uber had so much arrogance. It knew that its money will get it through in the end, that it could buy public opinion with its trendy apps and marketing campaign. The ill-informed public were taken advantage of. We are now inheriting a system that will not deliver the safety standards that the public believes it will.

I believe that security cameras were introduced to taxis in Perth some 30 years ago. At that time it was believed that a serial killer in that city could have been a taxidriver. Who knows how many deaths, rapes or bashings have been prevented through the installation of security cameras in taxis? We do not know how many disabled people have been helped by taxidrivers. If the KAP's amendments are not accepted, we will be throwing all of that away.

We should not use \$200 million of taxpayers' dollars as an acknowledgement to our taxi industry that we have allowed rideshare companies such as Uber to operate in this state and that our taxi industry has been displaced because Uber has ridden roughshod over our laws. We should take that money off Uber. Uber should buy its way into this market. Uber should be providing any money that it is given to the taxi industry. That \$200 million is a paltry sum. It should be \$1 billion, but even if that amount is \$500 million, Uber or any other rideshare app that has barged its way into the market should be providing it.

(Time expired)