




Speech By
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TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION (PERSONALISED TRANSPORT REFORM) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (8.04 pm): I rise to speak on the debate of the Transport and Other Legislation (Personalised Transport Reform) Amendment Bill. From the beginning Katter's Australian Party has been pushing for a fair and level playing field for the taxi industry. It was the KAP that introduced the first legislation around personalised transport. We have not dodged and weaved and hidden from our original position which is that we are 100 per cent for the Queensland taxi industry.

We have said from the beginning that we want to see Uber nailed to the coffin. What we are seeing now is a taxi industry that is on its knees as a result of letting a multinational company come into this country. I believe that this is an utter and absolute disgrace. These amendments might appear to be doing something positive to bring about a level playing field, but a level playing field would be the introduction of a \$250,000 licence fee, security cameras, insurance and every other regulation in the taxi industry. We can throw blame at each other, but from the beginning it was the KAP that introduced the legislation to impose four demerit points on Uber drivers, which was defeated by the House. The reason we introduced that legislation is because Uber was making a fortune while paying no taxes or fees and operating under no regulations or GST. I have the figures here. It is up to \$90 billion that the taxi industry pays in GST to the Commonwealth. How much does Uber pay? Absolutely nothing!

We can introduce 'Claytons' legislation that might be perceived to help bring about a level playing field, but from the beginning we should have had the intestinal fortitude to say that there will be no Uber in this state. If we were going to let them in we needed to put in place legislation to ensure they were on exactly the same level playing field as the taxi industry. I will read a press release dated 15 September 2016 from the Taxi Council. It is titled 'Taxi Council welcomes KAP illegal taxi crackdown'—not the LNP, not Labor, but the KAP. As I said, we wanted to see Uber buried. It has gone past that point, but we still want to see them buried because they are a multinational corporation and these are Queensland small businesses that have already paid their superannuation hoping to get something in return but now are unlikely to get it. I hope and pray that they do get something in return. The regulations in this legislation do not go far enough. From the beginning there should have been a four-demerit point penalty to target those who are driving illegal taxis in this state. The media release from the Taxi Council states—

Queensland's Taxi Council has strongly endorsed a private members bill proposed yesterday by the Katter Australian Party that calls for greater penalties for illegal taxi services, saying it was time that the Government became serious about the law.

Taxi Council Queensland chief executive officer Benjamin Wash said uber has been defying the law for too long and laughing in the faces of regulators and governments.

...

He said 'enough is enough' and has called on both Labor and the LNP to pass the Katter bill with the greatest of urgency

...

'Uber are an illegal taxi service, and are spawning copycats across Queensland. Right now anyone, anywhere can start to drive their private cars and transport the public and the Government is letting it happen.'

They were transporting the public. There were no safety regulations or checks. There were no licences. There was no \$250,000 upfront fee. If anyone commits a crime we have law enforcement onto them straight away. With Uber, law enforcement was completely, absolutely invisible. What was our government doing about it? They were talking about doing something. What was the opposition doing about it? They were saying, 'We really care about the Queensland taxi industry'. In the end if they were fair dinkum they would say, 'We want Uber out of this state,' or, 'We want a proper level playing field. If they want to come into this state they need to pay the \$250,000 licence fee, the same insurance, and operate under the same regulations.' I table this media release from the Taxi Council that was encouraging the parliament to support our legislation, which did not happen.

Tabled paper: Media release from the Taxi Council Queensland, dated 15 September 2015, titled 'Taxi Council welcomes KAP illegal taxi crackdown' [782].

The purpose of this bill is to give effect to the second stage of the personalised transport reform program. The bill is meant to strengthen safety standards and establish a general duty relating to the management of fatigue and a requirement for a zero blood alcohol level for the drivers of all public passenger vehicles, and provide a specific power to make regulations relating to the use of security cameras in vehicles. That sounds good, but it does not go far enough. Making regulations relating to the use of security cameras will never happen. The bill may give the perception that it will happen, but it will not happen. We ask the House to support the KAP amendments tonight, because we want to make it happen.

One area of great concern for rural and regional areas relates to maxi taxi services. I use the example of Charters Towers, where the maxi taxi drivers use their wheelchair accessible vehicles to pick up disabled people, but there is no money at all to be made in the provision of that service. They could go broke from picking up and looking after disabled people in that township. However, they can just about break even or get a little ahead during the peak hours from five o'clock to seven o'clock. Wheelchair accessible maxi taxis are losing out by providing a service to disabled customers, but they can break even if they work the five o'clock to seven o'clock shift. However, who will take over that five o'clock to seven o'clock shift? Uber will, and the maxi taxi drivers who provide a service to the disabled in regional and rural towns will no longer be able to make a living. Another issue for rural and regional Queensland is the poor mobile phone coverage, meaning that many people will not be able to download the apps. In an emergency, some people will have no chance of tapping into Uber. However, we already have Queensland owned small businesses that run taxi services.

The KAP will be moving amendments to this bill. We are not too stimulated about this legislation, because from the beginning our wish was that there would be no need for legislation. From the beginning we had hoped that anyone driving an illegal taxi would receive four demerit points, which would be a disincentive to anyone providing an illegal taxi service, which is Uber. Our amendments provide a little bit of balance. I commend the minister, who at least is trying a little, but he does not go far enough and that is why we have moved these amendments. Our amendments are not supported by multinationals; they are supported by Queensland owned small business. Those business owners have paid the price, they have put up with the costs and, hopefully, they will get something back in terms of superannuation. Many of them bought taxi licences because they believed that five or 10 years down the track they would get a return and be able to retire. The way things are going at the moment that is not likely to happen, although I hope that that is not the case. I encourage everyone in the House tonight to support our amendments, because they provide a little more balance and support the Queensland owned small businesses that run taxi services.