




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 3 September 2019

PERSONALISED TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.48 pm): In rising to speak in support of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Bill 2019 I wish to thank the people of Townsville for their welcome and note the extraordinary feeling of déjà vu—being here 17 years to the day after what was then known as ‘The Swamp’ was transformed into the Queensland parliament. My role then was different, but I wish to acknowledge all of the Parliamentary Service team who have achieved the 2019 transformation. Thank you for your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Having formerly been the minister responsible for the regulation of the personalised transport industry, it gives me great pleasure to contribute to this debate and I thank the Transport and Public Works Committee for its work in examining the bill and particularly the chair, the member for Kurwongbah. I congratulate the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for continuing the evolution of the regulatory framework for Queensland’s burgeoning personalised transport sector begun by me and the member for South Brisbane during our respective tenures as transport minister. When ride-book services were legalised in Queensland in 2016, some saw this as heralding the end of the taxi industry and others said that the requirements on ride-book services were too restrictive. What we sought and continue to seek as a government was a balance between passenger and community safety and choice for the consumer, as always getting the balance right.

Already the advent of ride-booking services has meant greater choice for passengers across many Queensland centres, including those away from the south-east corner including here in beautiful Townsville, and the establishment of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman, or PTO, is the logical next step in developing this evolving regulatory framework. It provides a one-stop shop for people with concerns or issues about the quality of service received by them from a ride-book service. It also is a point of contact where workers in the industry can address problems with their working conditions. I want to acknowledge the work of Peter Biagini and members of the Transport Workers’ Union as well as Rideshire Drivers in Cooperation Queensland, or the RDCQ, for their ongoing advocacy for better rates and conditions for their members. Parts of this bill are in large part thanks to the advocacy of the TWU and the RDCQ.

The PTO will be a well-equipped body that will be able to assess whether complaints received should be referred to the Department of Transport and Main Roads for disciplinary action or prosecution. Furthermore, the PTO will act as a monitor for developments on the ground within the sector, thus being a useful source of advice to policymakers to ensure that the regulation keeps up with the dynamic nature of the industry—an industry and a space that will continue to be very dynamic. We think it has been dynamic over the last few years, but there is far more innovation and change to come in the whole of the transport industry, particularly in the personalised transport industry.

I think it is poignant to contrast this proactive approach by this government and by this minister to dealing with the reality of the likes of Uber, Ola and DiDi alongside the traditional taxi industry with that of the failed Newman LNP government. The two people who were responsible for the

mealy-mouthed approach to Uber's arrival in Queensland are no longer members of this place, but who could forget them? In the absence of any attempt at regulatory reform, who could forget what Campbell Newman and Scott Emerson's response was? It was a letter to Uber that said, 'Go away. Please stop,' and that was it. Nothing else—no genuine response, no genuine engagement. That is not what good governments do, but that is what the arrogant approach to policy-making is and, in part, it is part of the reason the LNP lasted only one term in government.

Further, I am very happy to also see important provisions in this bill that modernise public transport ticketing and enforcement provisions through the amendments to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 and moving enforcement powers to the 2018 regulation. These measures will ensure that Queenslanders can continue to enjoy quality and reliable public transport services thanks to revenue streams that are protected, including when we move to the new ticketing solution in coming years—new ticketing solutions that will massively improve the accessibility of public transport to people right across this state, particularly to visitors and to people who are occasional users of public transport, and will encourage more use. As we have seen on so many occasions, it is when people use public transport for the first time—maybe they are going to a sporting match or something like that—that they realise how good and how efficient it can be and how useful it can be to them, and that is when they return and become regular users.

This is a very important bill. It is Queensland Labor that brought ride-booking services out of the shadows. It will be Queensland Labor that ensures it continues to create employment across our state within a rigorous regulatory environment, especially as the personalised and public transport industries continue to evolve in response to technology and market innovation. I commend the bill to the House.