



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (FURTHER EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (4.48 pm): As has been noted, the LNP supports this bill; however, as the shadow transport minister I want to speak specifically on the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Repeal Bill. The minister seems to be rather preoccupied by the make and model of the car I drive and maybe would be best advised to concentrate on his job.

By way of background, the establishment of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman, the PTO, was legislated nearly two years ago—back in September of 2019—at the regional parliament up in Townsville. The PTO was intended to manage taxi and rideshare customer complaints. The problem was that stakeholders did not support the establishment of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman. It was said, amongst other things—and I will come to some quotes a bit later—that it would be pretty much a toothless tiger. That was according to the Taxi Council Queensland. Consequently, the LNP did not support the bill. It did not have stakeholder approval at all. It was simply going to be just that—a toothless tiger.

The PTO was originally to be in place in March last year. However, in September 2020 it was announced that the appointment was to be postponed so that further consultation with the industry could occur—a real genius effort that! In June of this year the government announced that the act would be repealed, which is where we are today. Ridiculously, \$430,000 in costs have been incurred to establish the office. The Labor government will instead establish a mediation service through the Queensland government's dispute resolution services.

To be clear here, the government failed to listen to stakeholders and the LNP argued from the very beginning that the PTO would not have any real powers to deal with taxi and rideshare complaints. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads was warned by pretty much every stakeholder group that the creation of this position would be a complete waste of time. There was \$430,000 of taxpayers money used to set up the PTO. The costs included: office accommodation, \$115,000; information technology costs, \$211,000; communications planning costs, \$57,000; and there were recruitment costs, legal and depreciation costs, et cetera. If we were to add other internal project management staff labour costs plus on-costs, it probably would be close to half a million dollars.

The trouble is that the government might think, 'It's only half a million dollars,' but it is like anything. If you look after the cents, the dollars will look after themselves. If we were to say to every member here—all 93 members—'Here's a cheque for \$500,000. Could you do something in your local community,' I bet people would be bending over backwards to try to get a slice of \$500,000.

I want to make this a pretty quick contribution because there are other speakers on our side who want to zero in on some of the health provisions of the bill. I want to quote from some submissions just to prove conclusively that there was a complete lack of listening to stakeholder engagement. The Limo Action Group said—

It would have been more cost effective if Industry was listened to in the first place, as an Ombudsman would provide little to no benefit to the Industry or the community.

The Ride Share Drivers Association of Australia said—

When the draft legislation for the establishment of the Ombudsman was presented for comment once again RSDAA along with many other interested parties submitted that the proposed legislation was badly flawed and as well gave evidence at Committee hearings to that effect.

I reiterate what I said in regional parliament back in September 2019 when we met in Townsville. I quote from the *Hansard* at the time—

Today we are debating the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Bill and one of the great stakeholders in this entire debate, Taxi Council Queensland, simply does not support it.

To a large degree I think that says it all. It underlines the total failure of the minister to bring forward a bill into this chamber—wherever this great chamber may be physically meeting—that will meet the needs of the industry and consumers. As an example of stakeholder feedback ... the PTO presents as a 'toothless tiger'—

The bottom line here is this: at the end of the day, let us chalk this down to another failure on the watch of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. We all know he was described as foolish by the CCC. This ridiculous backflip can be described as incompetent and an embarrassing waste of taxpayers' funds, particularly hardworking public servants. This can again be chalked up as another Minister for Transport and Main Roads fail.