

## **Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and Customer Service**

**Inquiry into the operation of the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016.**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS – hearing on 25 September 2020**

**Mr Martin Rogers, CEO, NSW Taxi Council**

**Mr Brian Wilkins, President, NSW Taxi Industry Association**

**Mr Geoff Ferris, President, Country Taxi Operators Association**

#### **Question 1:**

Are all organisation members actual Taxi Owners?

#### **Response:**

Members of all 3 organisations own Taxi Licences.

- NSW Taxi Industry Association Members – Yes
- Country Taxi Operators Association Members – Yes
- NSW Taxi Council Members - Yes

#### **Question 2**

Mr Wilkins, as long standing past President of the NSW Taxi Council and currently, President of the NSW Taxi Industry Association, it was originally reported that you and your family members are multi Taxi Plate and Hire-car Plate Owners, with Taxis/Hire-cars throughout NSW including Sydney and the South Coast.

How many in total were owned by yourself or any other family members or held under company titles, family trusts or any other holding entities owned and controlled by you or any other family members as of the 1st of January 2012 and how many as of the 1st October 2020?

#### **Response:**

**Question 3:**

Under the same criterion, if any Taxi Plates have been sold/transferred between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, how many have been sold/transferred?

**Response:**

**Question 4:**

What is your estimated net loss or gain from the sale of said plates?

**Response:**

**Question 5:**

Prior to the Government announcing the decision to legalise Rideshare in NSW, was the Taxi Council made aware at any time prior to that decision being announced that legalising Rideshare was imminent?

**Response:**

The NSW Taxi Council was not aware of such decision.

**Question 6:**

If so, when were you made aware of it?

**Response:**

As the NSW Taxi Council was not made aware of it Question 6 is not applicable.

*NOTE ORIGINALLY: To show "all was fair and above board"*

*Via the media and the Taxi Council, the Government guaranteed the Taxi Industry representation in the initial assessment process of the AAPs schemes, involvement in determining the criterion for distribution of moneys and involvement in selecting and assessing successful Applicants.*

*Current revelation by the Deputy CEO of the NSW Taxi Council that he was no more than a non functioning observer demonstrates that from the beginning, the Taxi Industry has not been afforded any meaningful representation at all.*

**Question 7:**

In the circumstance, why did the Taxi Council carry on the charade to members of purporting to represent the interest of the Industry when they seemingly had no power and apparently were gagged regarding all major aspects of the proceedings?

**Response:**

The NSW Taxi Council refutes the statement that the NSW Taxi Council “carried on the charade”.

The NSW Taxi Council had a responsibility to its Members, and was committed to fulfill that responsibility, even if it involved attending THVIAP meetings, without the ability to vote. It was important that whilst there ever was an invitation to take part in these meetings, the NSW Taxi Council would always hold and maintain a seat at the table. Being a representative of the THVIAP panel was taken quite seriously by the NSW Taxi Council.

It must be noted that whilst the Deputy CEO was under an NDA, this made it more difficult and challenging in terms of raising and escalating problems that were identified. The Deputy CEO does feel that it was a difficult and uncomfortable experience not being able to resort to internal stakeholders for support and guidance on certain matters. There was one case where the Deputy CEO did seek approval from the Panel to engage with the NSW Taxi Council Board on a particular matter.

The Deputy CEO of the NSW Taxi Council was nominated as the CEO’s nominee to the Taxis and Hire Vehicles Industry Assistance Panel (THVIAP) on 25th July, 2017. The Deputy CEO entered into a Non Disclosure Agreement with the NSW Government as part of being inducted into the THVIAP process.

The Deputy CEO attended his first THVIAP panel meeting soon after this date. He was excluded from discussions relating to Taxi Schools, as well as Hire Car matters. The Deputy CEO was able to provide input into some of the THVIAP process, however, was not involved in any voting that took place.

The minutes that were documented for each of the THVIAP meetings are a true reflection of what took place and pin point the representations made by the Deputy CEO.

The NSW Taxi Council also made a number of representations with the Minister for Transport and representatives from TfNSW on behalf of our members regarding their financial circumstances.

This includes correspondence that was submitted to the Minister.

Concerns at the slow speed of the assistance scheme were also raised with the Minister.

**Question 8:**

Why in the circumstance did the NSW Taxi Council simply not remove its member from the proceedings?

**Response:**

As noted in question 7, the NSW Taxi Council felt that it had a responsibility to represent its Members wherever and however possible. This was a critical time for our Industry and this was certainly not the time to remove representation from important meetings. As the consequences may have outweighed the benefit of maintaining a seat at the table.

**Question 9:**

Why did the NSW Taxi council state as follows, when it obviously knew it had little or no influence in the proceedings?

(extract from email)

*"please be aware that we will not be advocating for non members and will not make arrangements for any "Buy Back or compensation" for anyone taxi operators who are not onboard and financial with the Industry Association."*

*Greg Kay, Head of Memberships and Partnerships (Government and Corporate), NSW Taxi Council*

**Response:**

The NSW Taxi Council has a responsibility and obligation to advocate for and provide support to its Members.

With limited resources it is critical that any efforts and resources of the NSW Taxi Council are directed towards their Members, to ensure that value and benefit is delivered accordingly.

This was able to be delivered directly through assisting members with their applications.

The NSW Taxi Council always welcomes non-Members to become financial Members. This will only enhance the resources available to support the needs of the industry.