

**INQUIRY INTO OPERATION OF THE POINT TO POINT
TRANSPORT (TAXIS AND HIRE VEHICLES) ACT 2016**

Name: Mr Peter Louridas

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Partially
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PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO.6
Point to Point Transport Act (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Inquiry into the operation of Point to Point Transport

My name is Peter Louridas. I am the owner of

I drove cabs through university and then as a full time driver. I now work as a licenced conveyancer at the Law Firm of which my wife is the principal.

In addressing point 'c' of the terms of reference, the taxi industry assistance package is quite simply, unfair. We were provided with guidelines for Additional Assistance and an income threshold. Because my wife earned 'too much money', it put me over an income threshold for both of us put together and thus, made me ineligible for additional assistance. The Additional Assistance Scheme was a total debacle and extremely stressful and onerous on people and not enough was done to assist those, in particular, the elderly and the mums and dads, who own 1 or 2 taxi licences. More on that later.

In 2001, I bought a taxi licence. The licence is covered with NSW Transport emblems - a symbol of trust. In 1988 and 1989, taxi licences were sold by the State Government directly to people, under the premise that this was 'Licence to make money'.

Many economists have said over the years in many reviews that taxi licence values were artificially inflated. **However, the government created an artificial form of property, by trading and issuing licences and accepting stamp duty. People**

saved for many years to buy taxi licences or invest in them with the expectation that the government would apply rules and they would be followed. Even if the market was artificial, people paid real money for the right to own a taxi licence. The government changed the rules. The changes have decimated the taxi industry in NSW and many people are facing a financial disaster.

There is an overwhelming number of people, (as outlined in the Sturgess report) who own 1 or 2 taxi licences.

Many of these people entered the industry and subsequently taxi ownership, because they were buying a job. Again it wasn't their fault that the government changed the rules and allowed investors to enter taxi ownership in the early 1990's.

If you look through a list of names who own 1 or 2 taxi licences, you will see many names from Lebanese or Greek backgrounds, or other ethnic backgrounds. You will also see many names replicated as taxi ownership was something that was introduced to people by those who were already participants, to family or friends.

These were not sophisticated investors, who had family trusts, or financial advisers, or generations of wealth or privilege. These were just hard-working people who saw an opportunity, to partner with that most trusted of institutions, the State Government.

Since the Government legalised ride sharing in 2015, the playing field has not levelled. Under the current regulations, the taxi industry isn't sustainable.

In addressing point 'a' in the Terms of Reference, the regulations imposed upon ride sharing are laughable. They need to be lifted. There is an inequity, a regulatory asymmetry between cabs and ridesharing. Ridesharing aren't required to install cameras, or place a fixed identity badge on their cars, or have a basic street knowledge, or do a defensive driving course. These aren't major impediments to ridesharing. These are quite basic safety requirements. Taxis and rideshare have not been regulated similarly. There is no level playing field. It is obvious to anyone who has taken an interest in their legality or otherwise around the world, that the only reason that they leave a city or a country is because of stringent safety regulations that are enforced that don't fit into their business model. This was the case in the UK and Germany.

NSW was one of the first jurisdictions outside of the USA to legalise ride sharing. There is no ridesharing in most of Europe. The Government bought the myth that ridesharing will solve unemployment and lead to people not owning cars. All that's happened is the streets have been overwhelmed by carbon emitting ridesharing vehicles and created a race to the bottom in the standard of point to point transport in Sydney.

If the government has no intention of raising the regulations for ridesharing, (not that I'm suggesting particularly harsh regulations), there can only be one course of action and one conclusion that this review should find.

That is, introduce a taxi licence buy back scheme and convert taxi licences to non-transferable licences, renewable annually. This recommendation from the

Sturgess report was not adopted. It was a mistake. In addressing point 'd' of the Terms of Reference, we were told the legal rights of licence holders would not change and we could still trade the licences. Well my property, being , is worth next to nothing.

Looking at Andrew Constance's first reading when the bill was introduced in 2016- was the current situation really what the government had in mind? I say no. **The day Uber was legalised, Mike Baird said the 'Government sold and regulated taxi licence plates and has a responsibility to offer protection to the mums and dads who own these plates.'** I have no doubt Mr Baird and Mr Constance had good intentions, but it was a mistake not to buy back licences at the time, on the premise that we still had property rights.

A buy back of taxi licences is a must and to take care of the 'mums and dads', especially those who own 1 or 2 licences in particular.

By removing the burden of taxi licence ownership, the words of Andrew Constance in the First Reading delivered on 2 June 2016, can be realised. That is, the 'taxi industry in this state can grow, thrive and survive'.

Thanks in advance and I am happy, if required, to assist in any hearings.

Yours faithfully

PETER LOURIDAS