

Submission on effects of Reform to the CPV Industry Victoria.

By [REDACTED]. (2nd gen. taxi licence owner operator driver)

On behalf of myself, my husband and business partner and my widowed 80 year old mum.

I give permission for my submission to be made public without identification.

The affects of these reforms have been for all previous licence owners, soul destroying. For some they have also meant loss of the family home and/or long ago planned and fruitful retirements. There have also reportedly been cases of suicide and even family breakdown. The ensuing mental health issues are far reaching although perhaps not obvious to those not concerned. Overall they were extremely harsh and seemingly ill thought out especially to those of us that had the most to lose.

My mother is 80 years old. Along with my father (now deceased) they worked very hard and sacrificed much over many decades to build a successful business and eventually after a working life a nest egg for themselves. When dad passed away unexpectedly almost 20 years ago he left behind a carefully planned network of income to care for mum. I tried to explain the reforms to her before the implementation, but she just could not grasp what was happening. She only finally understood and went into shock the day her lessee explained to her that her beloved licences, her assets, that my dad had left for her care and wellbeing were no longer hers and the income derived would no longer be supporting her but had been transferred to them. I think she aged 10 years in the next 6 months as it really sunk in. Mum is a very proud, independent person of sound mind and body but it took a long time to come to terms that this decision had been made for her not by her and with very little information forwarded. My family have all come together to help and support her which has weighed an extra burden on all concerned. Her trust of government will never be revived.

Our personal situation, leaves my husband still working as hard as ever, when we should be making plans to transition to retirement. He will be 68 later this year and is still working full time (60-80 hours a week in taxi industry). Our income level has dropped around 30% since reforms mainly due to the inability to operate our vehicles for as many hours as previously. This has left us largely without night and weekend drivers leading to the drop in income. For every kilometre we don't travel even at a poor \$1.00 per km rate amounts to approximately \$40-50,000 per year drop in income due to less kilometres travelled and less shifts covered per vehicle. That is due to lack of drivers to double shift vehicles and cover weekend shifts. The vehicles are not clocking up the mileage and therefore not producing the income. The government reforms taking this into account included some relief for replacement of vehicles by removing the age requirement replacing it with an annual roadworthy certificate, which had previously been a requirement and is not disputed. The networks have implemented their own rules which now require us to replace our vehicles (accepted by government with conditions) or pay an extra monthly fee to continue to operate them. The vehicle must also present to the network for inspection 3 -4 times a year. These requirements were not part of government reforms and only add to the pressures already being experienced. Reduction of red tape I don't think so.

I have been off work now for five months following a breakdown. I had when driving the taxi, experienced road rage which was becoming unbearable. The relentless media pursuit of some

industry issues for a sustained period of time seems to have led to less respect and unwarranted attention on the roads by some motorists. This has left me unable to fulfil my passion of driving a taxi and put more pressure on my husband as I am unable to contribute. I am attempting to overcome this but at present I cannot return to work. The wrongful removal without proper recompense of our assets, our hard earned perpetual taxi licences by this government has left me in a confused and depressed state of mind. I am thankful to have a loving, caring and supportive partner. We are not sure of what our future holds. We presently continue to live in our family home of almost 40 years. Our future at this stage of our lives, that we had planned following decades of hard work to establish such, seem almost pointless. Well meaning people that offer advice cannot really understand how the licences were linch-pins to the lives we live now and how they fitted into our future plans for happiness and security in our old age. We have been hard working, tax payers like anyone else building a support network for our future. We have not been people that liked to be reliant on government as such our plans to avoid this are now in shreds. When one authority deems a licence as an asset and another doesn't recognise this and we are left in the middle with no resolution, what are we to do? We are not resolved. This is not ok. This continues to be draining on our health, our wealth and our outlook to the future.

The industry is now dealing with a 750% increase in overall numbers. Since the reforms were introduced on July 2, 2018 taxi numbers have increased from some 5000 to around 12,000 and hire cars 2,500 to over 50,000. Without the corresponding increase in patronage, drivers from both taxi and hire cars are experiencing reduced revenue, longer working hours to make a viable income, more downtime between jobs and yet no decrease by networks in their fees meaning that the cost of acquiring a job through the various dispatch systems has risen markedly. Government has stated there will be no caps on numbers. During a routine visit to the network recently, my husband had a conversation with a fellow picking up his new taxi vehicle, financed by a department within the network, who had arrived in the country only six weeks prior. The oversupply and reduction of entry standards as recommended by Professor Fels who originally recommended the Knowledge Test but later when representing Uber stated that gps systems would negate the need for training is questionable. The accuracy of these systems is not infallible. Lack of local knowledge and other issues recently prompted Neil Mitchell from 3AW to assert that the industry is broken. The networks are profiting with a huge increase in numbers in the working fleet with drivers and operators paying a premium in network fees to access the dispatch systems for less work. The industry has turned back 50 years to when there were many smaller co-ops that merged over many decades in order to supply better customer service and efficiency of vehicle and thus more income, became 13Cabs (as they are known today) and SilverTop Taxis. For the cars to be as efficient and viable while delivering a better service the networks would have to share their offload (uncovered) work. Properly monitored this would inform government of the requirement to increase numbers. Government instead chose to deregulate the industry and then chose to devastate taxi licence owners. I believe the only jurisdiction in the world to do this. Theft of assets, business equity by this government is reprehensible. Is the government "compensating" North/East Link businesses with \$100,000 for the first property and \$50,000 for any other property up to four? Like taxi licence owners? Unbelievable to most in the public arena that only now are beginning to understand the treachery of this government's actions. Unbelievable yes. Unfortunately for us this remains our unresolved reality.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my thoughts.

