



Speech By
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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (5.24 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate of the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The LNP has some substantial reservations about aspects of the bill in relation to the taxi industry reforms. I note the shadow minister will be proposing amendments to this bill, which I support. The Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, the HVNL Act, and Schedule—Heavy Vehicle National Law provides for a single national law to regulate the use of heavy vehicles and establishes the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, the regulator, as administrator of the HVNL. Most Australian states and territories, with the exception of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, are participating jurisdictions for the purposes of the HVNL. The HVNL has been described as the cornerstone of COAG's national heavy vehicle reform agenda and ensures the industry can operate across state borders without conflicting regulatory requirements. Broadly, the HVNL standardises laws and regulations around the operation of the heavy vehicle industry.

The explanatory notes to the bill state—

The HVNL regulates matters about the operation of heavy vehicles such as mass and dimensions, vehicle safety standards, drivers' fatigue management, heavy vehicle accreditation, speed compliance and the use of intelligent transport systems. The HVNL also places obligations on identified off-road parties involved in the transport and logistics chain ... and includes enforcement powers and administrative provisions.

The bill amends the act to implement reforms for the national heavy vehicle industry to better align the obligations of chain of responsibility parties and executive officers with national safety laws, improve compliance and simplify enforcement. The amendments also make a number of minor maintenance changes with the purpose of improving the administration of the law. The bill amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 to introduce reforms to the taxi and limousine industry. It allows a regulation to be made providing a scheme for the payment of financial assistance to the taxi and limousine industry in order to implement the main elements of the Industry Adjustment Assistance Package, or IAAP.

Broadly, the LNP opposition supports the amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law. We have provided bipartisan support for the template legislation in the past. As the shadow minister for main roads at the time this legislation was being worked on around Australia and initially here in Queensland, I had the opportunity to be involved in the process. Queensland is providing template legislation for other states and, ultimately, nationally for the scheme. It was a useful opportunity to see how these regulations would need to be shaped in order to support the industry in Queensland in a way that connects with other states. It was a bipartisan situation. At the time, the federal transport minister was Anthony Albanese and there were high levels of cooperation between federal and state governments and oppositions. That was a very interesting situation in the formation of the original legislation. The NHV Regulator was set up in Queensland while the LNP was in government. We supported the intention of the reforms and the regulator's commencement of operations.

I will focus my remaining contribution on the taxi and limousine industry assistance aspect of the bill. This government has bungled the process of taxi industry reform since it came into power. We see that reflected in this bill not going far enough to resolve all outstanding issues. Sadly, the government has been largely dismissive of those affected by the changes. At least, that is how those who have given us feedback, the stakeholders in the industry, feel. They feel the government has been dismissive of their property rights and dismissive of the effect that the uncertainty has caused their businesses. The government has been asleep at the wheel, spending nearly 12 months on a review into ridesharing and leaving the industry and passengers in limbo in the meantime. The uncertainty has added extra stress to taxi owners and drivers.

This bill seeks to address some of the issues that the government has to date messed up. It allows for a regulation to be made to provide for a scheme for the payment of financial assistance to the taxi and limousine industry in order to implement the main elements of the IAAP. In August 2016 the government announced reforms to the regulation of personalised transport services in Queensland, including taxi, limousine and booked hire services.

A \$100 million IAAP has been announced to assist the taxi and limousine industry to adjust to these reforms. The \$100 million package includes: \$60 million towards taxi licenses at \$20,000 per licence capped at two licences per holder and \$10,000 per limousine licence other than special purpose limousine service licences; a hardship fund of \$26.7 million; business advisory support of \$3.7 million; fee waivers of \$4.3 million; and incentive payments for wheelchair accessible services of \$5.6 million.

While it is important for such funding to be made available, the feedback I have received from taxi owners in my electorate in Cleveland and in the broader Redland City—those who usually own one or two licences; small businesses—is that they are very angry that their licences have dramatically dropped in value, due in part to the introduction of ridesharing companies. These owners feel that this Labor government has let them down. They believe that Labor has unfairly supported the ridesharing companies. In the view of many taxi licence owners they have entered and remain in the market on an uneven and favoured basis.

One owner said to me that, now that the genie is out of the bottle, what they want is to be treated fairly and on an even basis. They want an even playing field with respect to issues like the quality of the vehicles, the safety standards for drivers and passengers, driver training, registration and insurances, GST payments and licence values or buybacks or compensation, among other issues.

Taxi owners in the Cleveland electorate and the broader Redland City who have met with me are offended at the paltry sum of funding being offered to them and want the government and the parliament to reconsider more fair and equitable values for their licences. Some of them paid up to \$500,000 for their licence. Some of them own one licence and it is their retirement savings. The loss of a licence will have a major impact on their retirement lifestyle.

The Transportation and Utilities Committee scrutinised the bill and made a number of recommendations. I do not intend to go into great detail on those recommendations. They looked at a range of things. I commend them for their work. They looked at compensation payments and appointing the independent agency the QRAA to assess payments. These were good measures that came from the work of the committee.

The government has so far failed the taxi industry. This bill at least provides the opportunity to begin to make a fair and level playing field for them. Sums like \$20,000, however, are completely inadequate. I support the shadow minister's amendments and urge all members of parliament to consider this issue much more carefully and think about the property rights and equity of those who are largely small business owners—people who own one or two licences—being left in very difficult financial situations. I believe we should do and need to do more and better.