



Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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PERSONALISED TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.08 pm): I, too, rise to address the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Bill 2019. As outlined by my good friend and shadow minister, the LNP will be opposing this bill. Like the member for Chatsworth, like the minister, like the member for Sandgate, I, too, have had some vested interests in the development of this bill and, indeed, this industry. As a former shadow minister for transport and main roads for nearly the better part of two years, I dealt almost on a daily basis with the peak industry bodies representing the taxi industry as well as rideshare, with individual taxi licence owners and with drivers to try to determine the best way we could regulate the personalised transport industry and deliver some better outcomes for all involved. The short answer is that this bill is not the answer.

As the member for Gregory outlined, this bill sets up a toothless tiger that not one single stakeholder supports. It is very rare, but even the unions are opposing what is being proposed in this bill. I will read the evidence of a number of individuals who appeared before the committee in the public hearing. Let us start with Mr Lee Norris of the Transport Workers' Union who said—

I do not think it can operate effectively.

He goes on to say—

If this particular office does not have the ability to make a binding decision on anyone, you can simply skate through the mediation process by stonewalling and nothing will be achieved through it.

His colleague, Dr John Martin of the Queensland Council of Unions, says—

Both of our submissions have suggested that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission already exists. It is an independent tribunal that is used to dealing with workplace disputes. It is up and running and has its own administrative support.

We would advocate for that being the body to which complaints of this nature would go.

Straight up we are already hearing that there are alternatives to establishing a new ombudsman for the kinds of complaints being proposed by this bill.

Mr Stephen Lacaze, who I met numerous times during my term as the shadow minister for transport and main roads, said in the public hearing—

It gives you no authority, no power. That was the absolute common theme through all the written submissions and I think we are all very aware of it.

Les Johnson, from the Ride Share Drivers' Association of Australia, again someone I met with on a frequent basis, said that what was actually required was an independent statutory authority or commission. He went on to say—

I have stated publicly elsewhere that this legislation is nothing more than a smokescreen and a waste of taxpayer funds. The person appointed to this role will have no real power to adjudicate a satisfactory outcome, nor will he or she have the power to make persons or corporations comply with the legislation.

If we then move to Jacqui Shephard from the Limousine Action Group Queensland—

Ms Jones: What's your answer?

Mr POWELL: I take that interjection from the member for Cooper. I will come to our answer, one that was actually supported by the taxi industry. Ms Shephard said—

We do not support this bill.

...

We do not feel that this ombudsman bill will address any of the issues that we are actually having. It poses little to no benefit to the limousine industry.

Blair Davies, the CEO of the Taxi Council, said—

As an industry body—I think you heard testimony of this previously—we thought there was an advantage in creating a personalised transport commission and a commissioner or commissioners who would oversee the industry, resolve disputes and lead the industry forward. We understand that the government got re-elected on a different agenda—to set up an ombudsman—and there is a significant difference between the ombudsman and the commission.

It is at this point that I point out that going into the 2017 election it was the LNP that proposed, as per the request by the Taxi Council of Queensland, a personalised transport commissioner, one that would look at resolving disputes, one that would look at overseeing outstanding issues within the personalised transport industry and one that would help that industry move forward. The LNP took that policy forward. It has been reiterated since by the shadow minister for transport and main roads. That is what the industry sought, not an ombudsman. When those opposite, including the member for Cooper, want to harp on about what is our solution, there you have it. You had it going into the last election. It was welcomed by the Taxi Council—indeed, it was their policy—and it has been dismissed and instead we have an ombudsman, the so-called toothless tiger, as those before me have said and as others reiterated during this public hearing that I am referring to now.

I also want to include the comments by Mr Paul Scaini of the Queensland Taxi Licence Owners Association. He said—

I have come here today to try to seek from the committee three things. Firstly, I would like you to do your jobs—not your jobs to your party but your jobs to the people who elected you. Secondly, I would like you to look at this legislation and have the strength of conviction to send it back to where it came from and say, 'This is a bad bill and we don't want to make a bad bill a bad law again.' In the absence of all of that—it is probably not going to happen, but I would like to think you would consider it at least—at the bare minimum I think you need to look at the problems that are evident within the bill and which you guys have already identified,

I cannot say it better than Mr Scaini. This is a bad bill. If we vote for it today we make it bad law. By making it bad law we have not achieved anything. Indeed, we have wasted taxpayers' dollars and we have wasted taxpayers' time. We have not resolved anything within the personalised transport industry. We need to go back to what was asked for by those stakeholders and that is to have a look at a personalised transport commission and commissioner to resolve the outstanding issues, to give this industry the focus and the vision that it needs moving forward. I oppose this bill.