

The Secretary,
Legislative Council, Economy and Infrastructure Committee,
Parliament House, Spring Street,
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Wednesday 12 June 2019

Dear Secretary,

The Taxi Industry reform, specifically the grossly inadequate compensation to me as a licence holder has had a devastatingly negative impact on my family. The value of my licence, which I held as an asset was completely and totally wiped out with the enactment of one piece of legislation and along with it the income I derived from this asset, as well as the other economic opportunities this asset made possible for me in acquiring a better standard of living for my family. It has set my family back decades and in a way that we will never recover. The compensation that amounted to no more than one fifth of the value of my licence was to say the least denigrating, degrading and outright insulting. It was a huge slap in the face from a government that purports to be that of the people. Never in the history of this country has a group of people been treated with utter contempt by their government than the taxi operators and licence holders of this state upon this so-called reform. Why? Because we were an easy target, brushed off as you would brush a piece of garbage off your kitchen floor.

Although I am a victim of this reform, I cannot help but feel for another group of people equally if not worse affected by this injustice. As you may be aware, the Taxi industry of this state was largely represented by immigrants who came to this country for a peaceful and prosperous life, something that they perceived as difficult or in many instances impossible to achieve in their respective countries of birth. This country opened its arms and welcomed them with the warmest embrace and with those same arms and with contemptuous fervour never before seen, stabbed them in the back with a dagger of disdain some 50 years later. In many cases this dagger proved fatal as many died as a result of heart attacks and strokes brought upon by the stress of this ordeal.

I was fortunate enough to be born to this this generation. They instilled respect, honour, dignity and a strong work ethos that comes with being a positive contributor to our country. They worked hard and sacrificed plenty so that they may have a comfortable and dignified retirement free of any reliance on any individual or society in general. They made this country their own and it made them theirs. No longer. They have been reduced to beggars and worse, and in a final insult, they have had to suffer the indignity of state reliance for their existence, something they worked very hard to avoid during their retirement years. This generation may not fully understand the workings of government, bureaucracy and legislation, yet they are well aware of the devastating consequences of greedy organisations who unashamedly flaunt the laws of the countries they invade and manipulate and bully politicians in supporting their own agenda, regardless of the negative consequences to the constituents these politicians purport to represent. After all, this is from what this generation fled post war Europe and elsewhere, only to yet again fall victims to its ugly face. This was not supposed to happen in Australia. This generation may not fully comprehend the concept of a smart phone or how a single app can disrupt what they have worked for their entire lives, yet they understand the notion of fairness and justice, something that is exemplified by the manner in which they have conducted themselves since arriving in this country. They understand that this reform is void of all notions of fairness and justice and has stripped them of all their dignity and self respect as it has taken their hard worked for assets from under them, leaving them destitute and desperate as the day they arrived at Station pier all those years ago. At least then they had hope, now they have nothing.

Referred to as the father of economics, Adam Smith, in his book "The Wealth of Nations" first published in 1776, advocates that the freedoms of the individual inspires innovation and technology and thus prosperity of those individuals and their respective nations as a whole. He sights the Magna Carter (1215) in outlining the importance of individual property rights as a major contributing factor in the prosperity of nations and that whatever wealth any individual acquired for themselves was theirs to keep. Upon the Taxi reform in Victoria, the Andrews Labor government stripped all the wealth of taxi licence owners and offered a token compensation for some licences and zero compensation for others, thereby perpetrating one of the greatest injustices by a government to its people in this country's history.

The prevailing State Parliament must make good. It must compensate ALL taxi licences at their market value at the time when they existed under a regulated and well-run industry. It must give the former taxi owners and operators back our dignity and self-respect. It must return our wealth, which it has stolen. It must restore our faith in democracy and government and importantly, in humanity.

Sincerely,

Petros Stamatakos

