

The Secretary
Legislative Council, Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

By email: taxiinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Nick Andrianakis I have been in the Taxi Industry for the past 38 years as an owner driver. My father drove Taxi's for many years and retired in 1980.

As a young lad I would help my father maintain his Taxi, washing, vacuuming and servicing. Often getting it ready for Inspection at the "the Avenue" located in Port Melbourne. You would drive your car over the "pit" where the inspector would go over every inch of the vehicle with a fine tooth comb. Your meter would be inspected for correct calibration via a dyno machine for correct distance and time operation. The vehicle would have to be in perfect condition, sometimes it would take two or three inspections before it was deemed to be safe and in perfect working order. This was done to ensure the safety of the consumer and the driver.

I started working at Martin Meters in Moore Street Fitzroy at the age of 18. Frank Hart was the owner/manager and at that time most Taxis were fitted with the meters produced here. My job was to assemble the new "Electronic Meter" as prior to this all meters were mechanical with moving parts. I was also responsible for installing and testing the new electronic meters in the vehicles presented for the upgrade.

At the age of 21 on a full license I was eligible to sit for the Driver Certificate (DC). At first I drove part time for my uncles as my father had retired and sold his Taxi. My father's brothers who lived in Australia all owned and drove Taxis.

In the early 1980s my wife and I were expecting our first child and we were thinking about borrowing money to buy our first home. It was a big decision for us

as we knew that it would be difficult to make repayments once the baby arrived. At the time we were living with my parents trying to save money for the deposit. As the cost of a Taxi plate and House prices were similar in value we eventually decided to invest in a Taxi Plate when my wife was pregnant with our second child. The thought process was that we would invest in a Government regulated industry which would generate income and take the pressure off my wife going straight back to work after the birth of our baby. My father put his house up as guarantor for us to secure a loan with the CBA. At this time the interest rate for a business loan was 14.5%. I started working up to 16 hours a day 7 days a week.

In the late 1980's the global financial crisis hit and I saw my interest rate skyrocket to 23 ¾%. These were hard times. By the mid-nineties we had invested in another two Taxi plates but I knew if we could ride it out there had to be light at the end of the tunnel. We survived the GFC all be it heavily in debt but with hard work and perseverance we knew that one day we would own these Taxi plates outright.

We were set for life **this was our super**. One day we could retire and not rely on the Government for a pension. We were totally self-reliant. We had invested with confidence in a Government regulated industry part of Public Transport with laws in place to protect the consumer and the stakeholders.

What happened?

A new idea came in from abroad. New technology an "App" they said!!

But wait!!

There are laws and regulations in place to safeguard the industry.

Sadly this was not the case.

Given the number of rules and regulations imposed on the Taxi Industry who would have thought that any political party would allow this disruptive technology to go unchecked for so long.

Where am I today?

I received a Government hand out of \$200,000 for my three Taxi plates that I no longer own which were once valued at \$1,500,000. My guaranteed super is gone.

My income has dwindled to next to nothing. My health has suffered and continues to suffer. Even though I keep fairly fit I had a heart attack two years ago. My Cardiologist put it down to stress as my tests came back clear. It is difficult for me to get behind the wheel of my Taxi even though I try almost every day. The depletion of work is remarkable I find it so overwhelming that it affects my mental state. As you no longer need to purchase a Taxi Plate it is impossible to find drivers as most drive their own Taxi or are driving Uber.

At 59 years old I am trying to reinvent myself and make sense of it all. I have seen an industry that I believed in and loved totally destroyed.

This is my story

Nick Andrianakis