

Mr Theodoros Tsiokas

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24/06/2019

Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament of Victoria

Dear Economy and Infrastructure Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to be able to submit my personal story about how the reforms to the taxi industry have impacted my wife and me, We came to this country as young individuals to make a better life for ourselves and any future children we would have, We both got factory jobs working for GM Holden and Toyota. We worked there for many years, paying our taxes, buying our home and rearing our children as productive and kind people for our community.

When GM Holden and Toyota no longer had jobs for us as our part of the manufacturing was being outsourced, I decided to buy a taxi licence as I thought it was time I worked for myself to provide for my family. Too proud to seek unemployment benefits. I felt secure as there were regulations in place by the Government thus also providing me income after I retired as I could rent my licence to another. This was my superannuation with some small investments that I had made along the way. I was going to be a self-funded retiree no need for the government pension. A great sense of achievement for me, coming from a war-torn country, with limited education where people were starving for a slice of bread.

Today I am a shell of a man at 79 years old and my wife is 74 years old. When the Andrews' Government revoked our licences it decimated our lives. We are now only living with the small investments that we had made along the way, with our annual income being below that of the annual aged pension. We've had to stop our private health insurance as we can no longer afford it, and my health issues range from diabetes to having to have a quintuple bypass surgery due to stress of the reforms. My wife's mental health has suffered, she is no longer the vibrant, energetic woman that I knew, that could look after her grandchildren. We constantly have to watch where we spend our money, as we don't qualify for the pension, therefore we do not receive discounts on our energy bills, on car registrations (we now only have one vehicle to share between us as we cannot afford to run two vehicles), doctor's bills as most doctors now do not bulk bill and any other benefit issued to age pensioners. In the state of Victoria everything is increasing in price, electricity, land taxes, rates...it's a huge struggle for us at this stage of our lives, where we should be thinking about holidays and enjoying our families.

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We also thought we could leave a viable small business to our children; our legacy something they could be proud of from their parent's hard work in our adopted country, our home.

Thank you for reading my story.

Sincerely,

Mr Theodoros Tsiokas