

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 reforms

Melbourne—Wednesday, 31 July 2019

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WITNESSES

Mr George Pavlou, Taxi and Rideshare Organiser, Transport Workers Union (Victoria and Tasmania),

Ms Debra Weddall, and

Ms Natalie Kingston.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome. The committee is hearing evidence today in relation to the inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 reforms. All evidence taken at this hearing is recorded by Hansard and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Today's hearing is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside the room and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Before you begin, please state your full name for the benefit of Hansard, and allow us some time to ask you questions. Welcome.

Mr PAVLOU: My name is George Pavlou. I am an organiser with the Transport Workers Union—the Victorian and Tasmanian branch. I am currently the official that looks after taxi, rideshare, hire car—which are limousines—and the food delivery industry. So I have been an organiser for about 11 years now, and I did work as a taxidriver and a hire car driver—not a food delivery person because that was way before that occurred, but I was a logistics courier with a bicycle and motorcycle in the 1980s and 90s so I have got a bit of an idea of what is going on, even though it was decades ago. So I will just start with a very—

The CHAIR: George, before you start, sorry, I forgot to mention that we have got Tim Quilty listening to us. He is not here, but he might ask you questions at the end.

Mr PAVLOU: Okay.

The CHAIR: And are Nat and Debra going to do any presentation?

Mr PAVLOU: Yes. Nat and Debra are going to—

The CHAIR: Just for the Hansard record: Nat Kingston and Debra Weddall, correct?

Visual presentation.

Mr PAVLOU: Yes. Nat and Debra have been rideshare drivers for enough time to know the ins and outs of it, and to know the inadequacies of it. Hopefully there are some bonuses to it. They will give us some stories about it but I am just going to go through a PowerPoint presentation to give everybody a little bit of a postcard snapshot of what this is really about.

So if everyone has been following the taxi industry, we know that there was a huge controversy with the devaluation of the plates, as we know them—and the licences for owners—the deterioration of working conditions for drivers, all together with Uber undercutting the market. So you can see what has happened. They have swooped in. I do not know if it is strategic, but they have definitely swooped in at an appropriate time. Most recently the rideshare drivers have really been manipulated by the Uber monopoly. So as we know, that is only one of the many rideshare companies in the country. Drivers everywhere—rideshare, taxi, hire car—the drivers with plates, the owners, everyone has seen a deterioration. Hire car drivers—and for everyone's general knowledge, a hire car driver is a different arrangement where they are basically a limousine service that is picked up with prebooking. So you can see that this platform has basically tried to undercut everyone in the scheme.

Rideshare drivers are engaged as contractors, but please remember that word 'contractors'. There is no security. Business risk costs are shifted to drivers. No guarantee for rates of pay. No workers comp—so if you get injured on the job, it is probably a TAC situation. No pay for waiting time. No protections for unfair dismissal. There is very little in terms of work health and safety by any of the major rideshare companies at this stage. No collective bargaining or representation.

Uber maintains a high degree of control over drivers despite maintaining they are independent contractors. So this is the ambiguity here—are we a contractor or are we not? Are we an employee? No, because they do not want to cover the cost. So incentive schemes which create these weird shift systems and bonuses for long hours—logging in at certain times—driver fatigue is not factored into this one. Financial stress is not factored into it. Terms of agreements set unilaterally. Subcontracting is prohibited. So that is why I wanted to highlight ‘contractor’ in the first or second slide. Suddenly we are not subcontractors because we are not allowed to get out onto the open market. Drivers are dependent on rideshare companies for all of their work—no ability to create an independent customer relationship with riders or pick up passengers without the app. So I am an independent contractor—why can’t I free-range it? You will get locked out. They will shut you down on the app. They will do something. Rideshare company branding label required on cars. So one minute I am a contractor; the next minute I am basically enclosed within the structure of that rideshare company, whether it be Uber or whoever else.

So what about the working conditions? In 2018 the Transport Workers Union and the Rideshare Driver Co-operative did a survey, and the findings showed some pretty outrageous things that were occurring within the industry because there is no reform, because there is no scrutiny and because we have allowed a corporate entity. That is no longer the top end of town, by the way; this is the top end of the globe. We are talking about global, multibillion-dollar organisations that have got the economies of small countries. So it is suddenly a not-in-our-own-backyard business.

This is what the survey came up with: on average, rideshare drivers make just \$16 an hour; 85 per cent are not satisfied with their earnings; three in four say company commissions are too high; and 31 per cent drive rideshare because they have debts to pay. That is the reality of the world, isn’t it. We have got mortgages, we have got school fees et cetera, et cetera, but these people have got the added debt of possibly the loan on their vehicle, or the lease, and the running costs—the costs modelling that is crucial for the contractor. Sixty-two per cent say pay is not enough to save for super or leave—so no superannuation. So if that is in the future, let us think about if you get sick tomorrow or if you want to have some time off. These are the problems that a lot of us in the room probably have never had to think about for the last few years because we are employed a government, an organisation, a company, and these are things that we accept as everyday in Australia.

Hours of work: half of the drivers work full-time. Low rates of pay and a lack of income security force drivers to work long hours to cover costs. Now, that is fine. You are working long hours. But we have always got to think about the health, safety and fatigue component. We have all driven cars, or we have all probably driven a vehicle in our time, and it is a fatiguing practice. But there is also the waiting component that no-one seems to want to factor into this scenario, and that is also fatigue because of the fact that you are hanging around, twiddling your thumbs waiting for the inevitable job or driving hungry looking for it. Most drivers work full-time hours. More than a third drive in excess of 40 hours per week. It is a lot of time on the road. Intrinsic risks are involved with that.

Harassment and/or assault: the elephant in the room, the unspoken one. Only the people that have been abused seem to get into the media when it has been a tragedy. This is the tragedy of it all. Do we have to allow incidents to occur for us to notice and to do something about it? Ten per cent physical assaults. You can read the individual quotes from the people; these are from the surveys. Six per cent sexual assaults. Thirty-seven per cent received threats. Just have a look at those little balloons there with the incidents that occurred. It is not right. It should not be happening.

Rideshare companies certainly are not supporting their workforce in reference to the fatigue, in reference to the threats, the violence et cetera, et cetera. Violent passengers are not banned from service, and drivers are left to deal with damage to vehicles, medical bills and long-term effects. If you do get assaulted, it is not over when the story is finished; it continues on for a very long time, as we know, depending on the extent of the injury. If you read that second line:

Too many times I’ve come close to being bashed by drunk and drug-affected passengers. Every time I contact the rideshare company they don’t even help.

Alarming sexual and physical assaults—drivers reported death threats and threats of harm, actual physical assaults and sexual harassment and assaults:

I had to file a police report because I was held at knifepoint. The rideshare platform didn't even deactivate the people's accounts.

I have been organising taxis for a long time. This is a threat in the industry, full stop. We get that. But at least the taxi system has got a series of systems that will be implemented, with security cams, panic buttons et cetera, et cetera. This is way too open; this is way too free range.

Job security: drivers routinely sacked—no notice, no reason, no right of appeal. Bang. See you later. Upon termination drivers are provided no opportunity to explain or contest decisions. So there is no tribunal; there is no way of going to the Fair Work Commission. Within minutes someone's livelihood is destroyed and they are scratching around looking for another platform, maybe, to jump on. Drivers face deactivation with no right of reply. Now, this one is quite devastating because if you get deactivated you might not know why you are being deactivated. There is not even the boss's door to knock on and say, 'By the way, why have I been deactivated?'. We have all been on the phone treadmill. You know, when you try to phone up the provider and you get on that treadmill. This is what these companies do. You cannot find the person to talk to. Contracts are signed under threats of deactivation, which forces drivers into self-destructive and often dangerous conditions of work, working too hard, too long. 'It'll be right. It won't happen to me. I'll do the next day'.

Drivers want to be paid a fair rate, we want protections against threats and assaults and we want to go to work and know our company will not sack us without giving us a right of reply.

This is from Emmett. He is a rideshare driver and he is also part of the Rideshare Drivers Cooperative.

Now we are going to have Natalie, who is going to go first. Natalie is part of the cooperative. She has been a driver for a number of years and has had quite a few varied experiences. So give us a couple of examples of things that have happened with you.

Ms KINGSTON: Well, when I first joined I was actually just trying to get another job and in the end I chose to drive for Uber, and it went really well. I was making a lot of money, but I did not know that there was any assessment procedure by them because I just thought I was doing my job and I thought I was doing it well. They started to send me a letter that my rating had dropped to 4.6 and that if I did not improve my performance I would get deactivated. So I started to do a bit of research and tried to figure out how to do it, but the company actually did not provide any sort of information to me on how to get to that point where I can actually work. So right now I am sitting at maybe 4.77.

What I noticed when I joined was that I just got job after job after job to the point that I could not even realise when I should go to the bathroom. You just turn it off and then you can go. But after three months the jobs just kind of tapered off and I went from earning whatever my goal was at the time to getting around \$12 an hour, even though I was putting in the same amount of work and the same amount of effort. I am not sure what the company has done or anything. There has been no personal communication with me about why I should be getting less work or earning less money. It just seems to be a trend. So a lot of drivers have communicated with each other and it seems to be an ongoing issue that you start and you get given a certain incentive to work and then after a few months it just kind of disappears. So, yes, I have just been at a point now where I have no chance to save money. I am on payment plans for all my bills and it has just been really tough to just be given this situation. The only reason I am an ABN worker is because I wanted a job, so I signed up for an ABN just to get paid, but I do not actually understand any of the factors involved in that, and there is no training provided for that either. So there are just a lot of unknowns for me during my job there.

Another incident I have had is passengers yelling at me while I was driving—something about a radio station. Then they were yelling louder and louder and louder and louder, and I was actually in a rural area quite late at night. I was shaking and I felt very unsafe, and I had to pull into a 7-Eleven and ask them to leave the car. The only reason I know about this safety procedure is that I communicated with other Uber drivers through a Facebook group. Uber actually never gave me any training on what to do when I felt threatened in my own car, so in that sense there is just no procedure in place. Then there have just been a few other incidents where I have had a lot of aggression from passengers. I have had one kick my door. But there was no point really going to

Uber about it because I have seen evidence that when passengers do affect your car, Uber just puts it in circles: they will not really help you or support your claims.

There have just been multiple incidents of drivers not being able to pay their bills. I have heard of drivers—they cannot take a day off because they just cannot make ends meet. At the moment we have got drivers logging 80 hours a week just to make ends meet sometimes. A lot of them are driving 60 to 80 hours a week because they are expecting to get the same amount of money as when they started, after the three months. We do not understand why the forecasting has changed if you are doing the same job and the same amount of customers are out there. So we do not know what the difference is and we do not know why we are being punished, let us say, financially, when we are just trying to do our job.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms WEDDALL: I have been a rideshare driver for two and a half years roughly.

The CHAIR: State your name again, please.

Ms WEDDALL: My name is Debra Weddall. It is the stupidest thing I ever did in my life. This is how it works: we believe that we are classified under the Trade Practices Act rather than any other industrial law as customers of the rideshare companies. We pay them on a per-trip basis a percentage of our income for the job request and for administration that we do not ask for, that we are signed up for, and part of the administration deal is clearly designed so that the terms of invoices can be written by Uber. It is tax, you know—it is dividing up where money goes. I would say it is tax dodging, personally, being protected by parliamentary privilege.

The percentages that they take—Uber do not really quite have a monopoly anymore, but they are still the market leader. The percentage that Uber take of our income, straight off the top, is 27.5 per cent. Ola take 15 per cent. DiDi take 5.5 per cent. DiDi pay us better and offer cheaper rides so drivers are at the moment flocking towards the other company. Uber is owned by an international—by a huge amount of people, including Saudi Arabia, SoftBank et cetera et cetera. They owe a lot of money to a lot of people. They are operating at a \$2.4 billion a year loss and they are diversifying into R and D for things that, as far as we can tell, are pipedreams—Uber Air, driverless cars, you know, this and that. They are doing that with the money provided by those who they borrow from and by drivers—by our work.

Uber estimates that they had 3 million drivers a year ago and they have recruited a lot since then on the road on any given day. That is effectively \$45 billion worth of cars, if you conservatively value a car at \$15 000, that we get nothing for. The idea of us being business partners becomes almost ludicrous when you look at that because who in God's name would actually go into partnership in business without ensuring that they got a return on their capital assets?

My experience driving is much the same as Nat's. I have been threatened. I have been abused. I think the bridge that most drivers cross is that we start off: 'Gee, I want to look at the world and see what's going on'. It is fascinating. I still talk to fascinating people, and I still learn so much from people. I am always quoting passengers' expertise in different conversations and in different areas of research. It is just great. But then people start putting in false reports about you and then they start rating you down for no reason that you can see whatever, and you are trying to do the best by them. Sometimes you are rescuing their kids, their drugged-out kids, from nightclubs, and delivering them to them or to hospitals, or talking people down after a hard night, or saving young schoolies, girls, who have put themselves in positions with groups of men—you know, all of that stuff.

On top of that then, somehow—and we do not know how, because there is no transparency whatsoever, especially with Uber—with that low rating, those lower ratings, every time you get a false report you are threatened with deactivation. Then if you come back with a good enough excuse, reason, or—

You know, I was reported for inappropriate sexual conversation with a boy that was old enough to be my grandson. I gave them a fair slap back with that one.

The CHAIR: We will leave it here just today, because we have got some questions to ask and then we will come back. If you would like to finish off.

Ms WEDDALL: I will just wind up. But the amount of work we are allocated as far as we know depends upon our rating. It depends upon things. And also complaints like what I just said that should go to the police—because they are complaints of illegal behaviour—are arbitrated by a private corporation.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

Mr BARTON: Hi there.

Ms KINGSTON: Hi.

Mr BARTON: How long have you been driving, Nat?

Ms KINGSTON: Two years.

Mr BARTON: Two years?

Ms KINGSTON: Yes, it has been two years.

Mr BARTON: So it is your belief that Uber throws more work to the new people signing up?

Ms KINGSTON: Yes. I call it the casino algorithm, because you know at the pokies how they get really addicted to all the pings and the noises?

Mr BARTON: Yes.

Ms KINGSTON: So I actually call this the casino algorithm that every new driver gets, and what happens is it is like a Ponzi scheme: because I am making all this money, I have got some unemployed friends, so I will call them up and say, ‘Do you guys want to join me? I’ve got this new job, and you don’t need anything, and you can all make money’. And suddenly I have brought six friends off Centrelink and we are all driving for Uber, and we are sitting there thinking we have got money, but then after about three months the money just tapers off, and we do not know why.

Mr BARTON: When the costs come back, yes. Nat, did you already have a car when you joined Uber or did you take advantage of one of their programs to lease a vehicle?

Ms KINGSTON: I am borrowing and depreciating an ex-company vehicle from my mother.

Mr BARTON: So you bought your own vehicle.

Ms KINGSTON: Yes.

Mr BARTON: And did you buy that vehicle to enter working for Uber?

Ms KINGSTON: No, it is an ex-company vehicle from a previous job.

Mr BARTON: So you used that. Okay; all right.

Ms KINGSTON: But it was brand-new when I got it.

Mr BARTON: Do you think the fact that Uber just has no control over the amount of vehicles going on the road was having an impact on your lowering of income? Right? Because certainly I know people who have been in the game for a long time, going right back to 2013, when they were operating illegally. His income now is probably around 70 per cent.

Ms WEDDALL: Hugely.

Mr BARTON: Would that be fair to say?

Ms KINGSTON: No, mine has gone down to 20 per cent of my income.

Ms WEDDALL: Yes. It is much more than that—hugely.

Ms KINGSTON: Sorry, I was getting \$45 an hour and now I am getting \$12 an hour.

Mr BARTON: Right, and out of that \$12 an hour you have got to pay—

Ms KINGSTON: I have got to pay everything.

Mr BARTON: your petrol, your tolls, your parking.

Ms KINGSTON: My suspension has gone. My shock absorbers have gone because of big loads. I have got to get a new transmission. That is all about two grand. All this sort of thing would be fine if I was on that original amount where I was doing the \$45 an hour and clearing a decent amount of money after my expenses, but at \$12 an hour I cannot afford to do all the repairs on the vehicle.

Mr BARTON: It is unviable to continue at \$12 an hour.

Ms KINGSTON: Yes. A business has many partners, and if a system of one business is not working then they will actually shut down their operations or get their operations to be more efficient, but we are in a situation where we have got customers, we have got Uber and then we have got the drivers in the middle that are not a successful business model.

Mr BARTON: Have you joined Ola and DiDi?

Ms KINGSTON: I am on six driving apps.

Mr BARTON: Six?

Ms KINGSTON: The second my income dropped in April last year—so in April 2018 they introduced a system called UberPool, and that meant up to four people could go into one car.

Mr BARTON: That is going to save the world apparently!

Ms KINGSTON: It is apparently more environmental, but it was only available to smaller cars. The larger vehicles like the SUVs can opt out of it, even though they have got a better capacity for more passengers.

Ms WEDDALL: It is dangerous for drivers.

Ms KINGSTON: And we are not insured if passengers harass each other, and in society people do talk about catching UberPool to meet people.

Mr BARTON: It is ugly out there, I know?

Ms WEDDALL: You know what? Our greatest fear when we go out on the road is not being assaulted. It happens or deactivate it. That is not our greatest fear. Our greatest fear—and this is every driver—is that we are not going to earn enough money to survive, that we are going to not be able to pay our bills, not be able to pay for our house.

Mr BARTON: You almost become trapped.

Ms WEDDALL: Trapped—you are trapped.

Mr BARTON: You become trapped. You are chasing it.

Ms KINGSTON: It is a circle.

Ms WEDDALL: We are trapped by debt. You stay in it for a little while and you start getting in debt.

Mr BARTON: Did you buy a car to drive for Uber?

Ms WEDDALL: No, I used to have my own company and I had a company car already.

Mr BARTON: You had your own one. What would be your best guesstimate about the amount of people who have actually gone into a car program, like with Splend, and gone on leased vehicles to go do it?

Ms WEDDALL: No, we do not have the figures. It would be really difficult.

Mr BARTON: It seems to me they are nearly always a Toyota hybrid Camry.

Ms WEDDALL: But I will say two and a half years ago it was rare, but now it is very, very common.

Ms KINGSTON: Uber is trying to standardise their fleets, and that is why they are encouraging the rental system, so that everything is at a streamlined standard. Before when everyone was providing their own car there was a variation in their standard, and obviously as a business that is not good for them.

Mr BARTON: They want to create a taxi fleet without calling it a taxi fleet.

Ms KINGSTON: Correct.

Mr BARTON: Yes.

Ms WEDDALL: We think that they perhaps preference those who have cars that they lease from Uber's partner agencies for work.

Ms KINGSTON: They are paying a minimum of \$250 a week, so these individual operators will have to be guaranteed by Uber a minimum of \$250 a week to at least pay their car payments.

Mr BARTON: So there is a commercial arrangement there. So there is a commercial arrangement between Uber and these mobs?

Ms WEDDALL: We believe there is.

Ms KINGSTON: We are not given proof.

Ms WEDDALL: Our information on that was in something that was said by the ACTU. I cannot be more explicit than that, because I do not know more than that.

Ms KINGSTON: It was in a confidential meeting, so we cannot really talk about it.

Mr BARTON: Sure. That is okay.

Mr DAVIS: I have got a couple of questions, thank you, Chair. The first one is to Nat. I think one of the key things here is the safety of people involved in the sector, both taxi and Uber and other ridesharing, and you related an incident for example where a door was kicked in. Is there a procedure to report that to the police and get police investigation? It seems to me you are actually in a situation where—I am just trying to understand.

Ms KINGSTON: The passenger has privacy, so—

Mr DAVIS: Well, not if they commit a criminal act.

Ms WEDDALL: No.

Mr DAVIS: No, they do not have privacy then.

Ms WEDDALL: The company will not disclose that person's information except to the police.

Mr DAVIS: Well, that is what I am saying.

Ms WEDDALL: You have to report it to the police, and whether they follow it through or not—I had my car damaged by a passenger opening it into one of those green seats. The police would not follow it through. They said it was too-small damage.

Ms KINGSTON: Because they are minor. It is a minor incident.

Mr DAVIS: But kicking a door is actually a violent act as opposed to a mistake.

Ms WEDDALL: Yes.

Mr DAVIS: I think there is quite a distinction in those two cases. I am just trying to understand. If something violent or threatening occurs, do you report it to the police? Is there a mechanism to do that?

Ms KINGSTON: I did both. I had an incident. I reported both to the police and to Uber, and I did not hear back from any of them.

Ms WEDDALL: There is not a mechanism to do it.

Mr DAVIS: So can we have details of that? We will actually follow-up.

Ms KINGSTON: They are quite emotional emails, but sure.

Mr DAVIS: This is a basic safety issue.

Ms KINGSTON: The record of contacting the police is a phone call.

Mr DAVIS: Nonetheless.

Ms KINGSTON: Okay.

Mr DAVIS: Nonetheless there must be record at the police, and we want to know what has actually happened on these sorts of cases. I think that is one useful thing. There could be some protocols or agreements with the police so that there are protective mechanisms that can be put in place.

Ms KINGSTON: There should be a police department that should just be for rideshare, to be honest.

Mr DAVIS: Well, I am trying to understand how this works now. It does not seem to me it does work much.

Ms KINGSTON: No.

Ms WEDDALL: Would it not be a great idea if anything that was of a criminal nature actually was routinely forwarded to the police, whether it be on behalf of the driver or on behalf of the passenger? Anything that is criminal surely should be handled by our justice system.

Mr DAVIS: I am sure Uber would say that their mechanisms of rating people would help on this, and that might or might not be true, I do not know. But it seems to me that where a criminal line has been crossed there needs to be—

The CHAIR: Any other? We are running late.

Mr DAVIS: Yes. Just looking at your submission, and thank you for the submission, I just want to quote a couple of points—my second and distinct point. This is on page 5:

Something unquestionably needed to be done to address the injustices wrought on the existing taxi and hire car industries by the introduction of Uber, and ridesharing more broadly.

It goes on. There is an indication later:

The question was then how that compensation package ought be funded—namely, by the taxpayer, industry, or consumers ... it appears as though the consumer has largely footed the bill, with the levy having been passed on by CPV operators in almost all cases. It will be interesting to see whether this has had any impact on the—

overall fares. Then it goes on:

... the TWU welcomes the payment of compensation ...

But I think your point is in the submission that the compensation package has been inadequate?

Mr PAVLOU: Yes. It does not cover it. It does not actually—

Mr DAVIS: No, I am agreeing.

Mr PAVLOU: So that is more discussion.

Mr DAVIS: I am just wanting that on the record very clearly.

Mr PAVLOU: Yes. I think that there needs to be more discussion around that actual—

Mr DAVIS: For the existing operators and so forth.

Mr PAVLOU: Absolutely.

Mr DAVIS: Did you raise that with government ministers at the time?

Mr PAVLOU: I did not personally do it, but yes it was brought—

Mr DAVIS: Did the TWU raise it with government ministers?

Mr PAVLOU: Yes. I do not know the detail; I can find out, though.

Mr DAVIS: That would be helpful, and if there is any documentation of that, we would welcome that.

Mr PAVLOU: Sure.

Mr DAVIS: Thank you.

Mr QUILTY: I guess my only questions are around why drivers are staying if the money is bad. Obviously we have heard that some are getting locked in with debt contracts, but surely if the pay gets too bad, drivers should be leaving and making this a self-correcting problem.

Ms WEDDALL: Maybe what, sorry?

Mr QUILTY: If the pay is too low and all the drivers leave, Uber will have to raise the amounts of money that they are paying people, so I wonder what stops that.

Ms WEDDALL: Okay, yes. Just really straightforward—you heard the amount of hours that people are having to drive to actually make an income. People are trying to keep on top of their expenses on a week-to-week basis, and sometimes on a day-to-day basis because you can cash out money in between, and the amount of time that they are actually putting in leaves them very little time or energy to do anything else.

Mr QUILTY: Do you say that every single driver is in the same situation?

Ms WEDDALL: No. There is a certain percentage of part-time drivers. Driving rideshare is probably a much better proposition for part-time drivers because they would be drivers that have full-time employment and they are just looking at a bit of a top-up. So it does not actually matter to them, it is the full-time drivers. Many people will say as an off-handed comment that 'it was never meant to be full-time' but that is a bit of a joke because in every part of the transport industry, no matter what you introduce, it will be full-time work for a large percentage of the people in it. I think it is more like 70 per cent who are full-time at the moment.

Ms KINGSTON: Can I add that as a company I believe that they have some awareness to forecast how much business they are going to get and the spread of the business. Generally a company would forecast how much staff to put on in a particular time or season, and we are in a position where Uber is continually hiring

new drivers without any understanding or without sharing with us as a partner the information of the forecasting of the work.

Mr PAVLOU: They do not care.

Ms KINGSTON: So if they actually used the data along with their drivers in partnership we could get to a point of an agreement where there is the right amount of drivers on the road for the right amount of work—where we could get the remuneration we require for the work we have done. That would be ideal.

Ms WEDDALL: Also, people who are on very, very minimal expenses, like a single person that is going through university that is actually trying to make that, they might spend all of their—they are 25, they are young, they are fit, they have got lots of energy; they might spend their entire time when they are not at university driving. Those kids, they are okay; it is the year-in, year-out drivers that are most affected, who have expenses, who have a home set up and the kind of expenses that most of us have.

Mr PAVLOU: Can I bring everyone's attention to pages 10 and 11. There are other examples around the world—the New York example; there is also the New South Wales example—where they do talk about such things, where the company takes on the responsibility of working out the density of drivers, the time of the day. They have now been forced in New York to actually comply to this. This has been going for about three months. There is going to be a six-month re-evaluation of it. But to give you a general idea of what that has put into the general community in New York, it is US\$172 million that is being pumped back into the community out of rideshare pockets, out of the big companies' pockets into the community. What is that telling you? That is filtering through. These people are getting more money. They are spending it on services and the basic necessities of life.

Mrs McARTHUR: George, I think you mentioned that Uber had a monopoly, but it does not clearly; there are other players in the market. And given the figures you gave us that Uber take 27.5 per cent and others down to 5, was it—

Ms WEDDALL: Uber leads the market.

Mrs McARTHUR: Yes. Also a bit like Tim, I do not understand why you are not moving to all the other rideshare apps to do the work.

Ms WEDDALL: We are.

Ms KINGSTON: We follow the customer.

Mrs McARTHUR: So Uber will go out of business technically, won't it, if you all move as drivers to the other rideshare businesses because they are not providing a service that is good enough for the drivers and maybe not the consumers as well? So won't it sort itself out?

Ms WEDDALL: No, not necessarily. Uber spend a huge amount of money on marketing. They do things like offer people money to put new people on. Basically what they believe is the faster they can deliver a car to a person, the more likely they are to get repeat customers from that person. They are also offering bonuses to customers. We know if we do not get as much work on DiDi, which is the best platform for us to work on at the moment, it is because Uber has put out a week-long bonus for passengers, so passengers just go wherever the ride is cheapest. Uber have been the ones that have played that—they serve that.

Mr PAVLOU: And Beverley, that is why we have the belief that they are a monopoly, because they can keep adapting to the environment and it becomes all-consuming with such a large organisation and an entity like that. And I guess the question of 'Why don't you just move on and get another job' is give us a job. We will take it, because a lot of these people have either lost a job, they are in uni, they are parents, and it fits into their schedule. But give us some work and I am sure that these platforms will disappear. They will go.

Mrs McARTHUR: I meant why don't they move to the other rideshare businesses that are obviously much better at offering your services.

Mr PAVLOU: They are. Absolutely. And just one last thing. Do not forget that these companies love to say that they are disruptors, and they are disrupting everything. Is it for the better? Probably not. They are disrupting a system that we have had implemented in this country with our industrial relations system. They have come and disrupted it and we are sitting back and letting them do it.

Ms WEDDALL: And it is things that we really take for granted no matter what side of politics we are on.

Mr PAVLOU: We need another half-hour.

The CHAIR: I have got to interrupt, I am sorry.

Ms WEDDALL: There are certain things that we really take for granted in our system politically, you know—occupational health and safety.

The CHAIR: Final question, Rod—quick one.

Mr BARTON: One of the main things I am very concerned about is the safety. We know that when we put cameras in taxis there was a marked drop in assaults against drivers and customers. It worked both ways. Would you feel more comfortable if you had cameras in the car?

Ms WEDDALL: Do you know something? I have a camera in my car that does not work and I actually think it has saved me because people do not know whether it works or not. It is just sitting there in their view. Yes, a camera would be a great idea. However, we do not want to get locked into a situation which has been pointed out to us by our Queensland comrades. It has been pointed out to us that we do not want to get locked into a situation where we have to pay thousands of dollars to a company that has tendered for that on the basis that they are making a profit out of installing those cameras. We cannot afford to pay those thousands of dollars.

Mr BARTON: Safety is never negotiable; I am sorry.

Mr PAVLOU: They see the anxiety. It is all-consuming. So this entity looks at every possible hole in the market. If it is not out in the rideshare, we will get it out of the drivers.

Mr BARTON: That is right.

Mr PAVLOU: We will set up cameras and you will pay for it.

Ms WEDDALL: What about they pay for it?

Mr BARTON: Of course they can.

Mr PAVLOU: It is an all-consuming model.

Ms WEDDALL: What about they pay for it? What about other companies pay for it?

Ms KINGSTON: I have been trying to organise cameras since I joined, but I just cannot afford it.

Mr BARTON: The Chair is going to have a heart attack if we do not stop.

The CHAIR: Because Mark wants to ask a question.

Mr GEPP: Well, a comment and then a question. My comment relates to why people don't just shift to a different employer. That is very simplistic.

Ms KINGSTON: 'Employer'—that is the key word here.

Mr GEPP: Yes, I understand, but why don't you just switch jobs? That is very unrealistic in my experience, both as a union official before I came into this place and now. I just want to particularly ask a question, though, in relation to this occupational health and safety. Are you saying that where a customer transgresses, the rideshare companies do not remove them from their database?

Ms WEDDALL: No, they do not, and that was borne out.

Mr GEPP: There is no red flag that is placed against that person's name.

Ms WEDDALL: They say in a reply to us that it has been noted and if reports of that nature keep occurring, that person may lose access. But we have never actually ever seen or heard tell of a single passenger that has lost their access. Even people that have been guilty of sexual assault that have been reported to Uber—we do not know that they have lost their access. You would expect in the course of a few years that you would hear on social media, in the media, something about someone losing their access and someone saying, 'It was unfair that I lost my access'—something. We have not heard of one case.

The other thing that you talk about with jobs—Emmett, who was on the screen before, is a geologist and a pilot. He is now running a program for a mining company. This is a food scientist. I am a program manager. There are many migrants working, and many of our migrant colleagues are also highly educated. Many of them have masters degrees.

Mr GEPP: And you made the point earlier that for many drivers in the rideshare industry it is a secondary or supplementary income—not always the case.

Ms WEDDALL: There are so many reasons.

Mr PAVLOU: A supplementary that ends up being the prime—

Mr GEPP: Yes, I understand.

Ms KINGSTON: There are people who care for the elderly and they can only drive a little bit to pay for that. There are all sorts of situations.

Mr PAVLOU: I am finishing. Sorry for holding it out, but please go to the other examples if you can, the New York model and good old Australia—chapter 6. They are both things that the committee should seriously consider.

The CHAIR: Thank you. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your time and contribution—

Mr PAVLOU: Thank you for having us.

The CHAIR: You will receive in a few weeks a copy of the transcript for you to correct any typographical errors. Thank you very much.

Ms WEDDALL: And thank you for hearing us. Thank you for letting us actually say what it is like for us drivers.

Witnesses withdrew.