

**A Submission to the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure
Committee Inquiry
into the reforms introduced by the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act
2017
and how they have affected the industry.**

This Submission was prepared by Eleanor Fitz on behalf of John Frederick Fitz

WHO IS LEGALLY BLIND FROM ADVANCED GLAUCOMA

(evidence of this can be supplied if required)

Summary

John has informed me that whilst he has accepted that the services, and operations of the Victorian taxi industry of the 2000's and onward needed some reform.

JOHN, LIKE SO MANY OF HIS TAXI INDUSTRY ASSOCIATES IS ADAMANT THAT THE ANDREWS GOVERNMENTS REFUSAL TO REALLY HEAR WHAT SO MANY INDUSTRY OPERATORS WERE SAYING AS THE REFORMS WERE INTRODUCED AND LEGISLATED, SAW THE INDUSTRY SET ON A PATH TO FINANCIAL DESTRUCTION FOR A VERY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF OPERATORS.

John's question to the Senate Inquiry Committee is:-

WHY DID BOTH SIDES OF GOVERNMENT, FROM THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONED FELS INQUIRY, AND THE FOLLOW ON ANDREWS GOVERNMENT, IN ITS CRAFTING OF ITS TAXI REFORMS IN ITS FIRST TERM, NOT LISTEN TO THE FEEDBACK AND CONCERNS OF MANY SMALLER OPERATORS OF THE VICTORIAN TAXI INDUSTRY WHO FORSAW THE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED THEN LEGISLATED DRACONIAN INDUSTRY REFORMS?

John's situation.

- John purchased his first PERPETUAL taxi licence in 1984 and in doing so joined Amalgamated Taxis Wodonga ATW - Now Wodonga Taxi services Co-operative. Soon after he joined the ATW co-operative, the other owners of the then co-operative, in recognition of his long-standing experience as an executive with a major transport industry company focussed on General Cartage, Car Carrying and Heavy Haulage, determined that his industry and business experience was of significant value and offered him the role of President and General Manager of ATW. A position he held for 12 years.

In his time as President and GM for ATW John recognised the need for service expansion and oversaw the planning and introduction of the first Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Vehicle in the North-East of Victoria.

At the same time, he became an active member of the Executive Council of the Victorian Taxi Association and was a Councillor for many years as he represented and presented, regional country specific operational issues that were then, and still continue to be different today to the then industry association and voice of the industry to the Government of the day.

John says a key issue of country and regional taxi services is that they are local! The taxi operators know their customers and their service preferences, depending on the days of the week and service needs times. The operators and their drivers know which shops, medical centres, banks etc that their customers go to and will take them there without specific direction. Along the way conversation often centres around family, social activities and the like. In short there is a lot of personal rapport that is not known or readily identifiable in metropolitan Melbourne.

Further to the local relationships, a significant number of the disabled community within Wodonga and environs also reflects special connections with families and carers again as they and their special and general needs become known.

- In 1995, sight deterioration from an earlier onset of Glaucoma saw John lose his capacity to drive professionally and he sold his PERPETUAL taxi licence. – A LEGAL PROCESS THAT RECOGNISED PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCES AS LEGITIMATE PROPERTY THAT COULD BE ON-SOLD, OR LEASED AND OR ASSIGNED, SUBJECT TO APPROVAL FROM AMALGAMATED TAXIS WODONGA AND THE THEN VICTORIAN TAXI DIRECTORATE.
- A few months later, in the swirl of deciding his next business steps, John heard the call of the First Kennett Government as it asked people all over Victoria, to support Geelong and environs in the disastrous economic aftermath of the city's 'Pyramid' collapse.

John with his taxi industry expertise and connections determined to purchase a PERPETUAL taxi licence in Geelong and assign it. In doing so over a 24/7 week the assignment created work opportunity for 4 drivers.

THE LICENCE PURCHASE AND ASSIGNMENT WAS AGAIN A LEGAL PROCESS THAT RECOGNISED PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCES AS LEGITIMATE PROPERTY.

THE URBAN PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCE FOR GEELONG AND ENVIRONS WAS LEGALLY ON-SOLD AND ASSIGNED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL FROM GEELONG RADIO TAXIS NETWORK AND THE THEN VICTORIAN TAXI DIRECTORATE.

The assignment of the licence brought a good annual return which at the time it was stolen and negated by the Andrews Government was \$22,000.00 PA.

The same government then gave John an insulting \$100,000.00 as an industry transition adjustment.

A miserable 4 year return against what was a legally purchased life-time investment.

John would like the inquiry committee to explain to him and every other assigned licence holder how a stolen negated perpetual taxi licence can be justified by a token short term transition payment as an alternative to compensation for a pre-reforms licence valuation of \$350,000.00.

John would like the committee to know that pre- the taxi reforms, John's licence valuation as a tradeable and marketable asset actively contributed to John's Centrelink denial of his ability to qualify for a Centrelink authorised part pension.

Post the reforms implementation and loss of his licence, he qualified for a full pension. **He would have preferred to have held onto his perpetual licence and its assignment but was given no choice!**

- **REPRESENTATION TO THE ANDREWS GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE UNJUSTNESS OF THE STEALTH AND NEGATION OF JOHN'S AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER LEGALLY PURCHASED PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCES ACROSS THE STATE FELL ON DEAF EARS AS DID THE TAXI INDUSTRY OPERATORS PLEADING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER OTHER REFORM OPTIONS.**

JOHN BELIEVES THAT THE COMMITTEE SHOULD RECOGNISE THE ANDREWS GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO AVOID ANY LEVEL OF COMPENSATION TO PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCE HOLDERS AND THROUGH THAT DETERMINATION, DENIED THE LONG-STANDING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RULING THROUGH THE ATO AND CENTRELINK THAT PERPETUAL TAXI LICENCES WERE PROPERTY AND ASSETS.

Other circumstances:

Aside from John's circumstances, the inquiry committee should also recognise that pre-the announcement of the taxi industry reforms and legislation, recognition of the commercial and market value of perpetual taxi licences was held by banks, superannuation funds, commercial and other businesses. The negation and stealth of the licences without due compensation and the token and limited transition payments saw many perpetual licence holders 'go the wall' and suffer real financial hardship as banks and other financial operators called in loans, and planned superannuation funding just disappeared!

Where is the justice in these government initiated and led circumstances?

CONCLUSION:

John has stated that he is appreciative of the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate inquiry and looks forward to hearing of the committee's recommendations and proposals for full pre-inquiry compensation value, and reparation via legislative change and amendments.

John Fitz through Eleanor Fitz



12-6-2019