

My name is Stuart Arnel I have been a Taxi driver for over 30 years and have suffered recently at the hands of the Andrews government and the so called Taxi deregulations

### **Personal circumstances**

I am aged 62 and due to the changes in the Taxi industry I am now forced to shut down my Hirer Car Business in the Macedon Ranges and go back to working as a Taxi Driver full time. The changes to the industry have devastated my wife and I. All I have worked for over the past 30 years have all been for nothing and after paying bank loans for 30 years I have NOTHING to show! Nothing to show for all the hard work and nothing to retire on, this Taxi Licence was to be my Superannuation and my retirement plan now I have nothing. I am married (for the second time) 5 years, without the love and support of my wife and family I don't think I would be here today. I have 3 married children now and 7 grandchildren from my first marriage. My children grew up with their father working long hours in the Taxi to pay the Taxi Licence loan and put food on the table. Now at a time in my life when I should be able to spend time with my wife, children and grandchildren I can't, I'm now working longer hours some times 7 days a week. My wife Julieanne was not working full time until 24 months ago when the changes to the Taxi Industry and Uber affected our capacity to earn an income and support my family and pay my bills.

### **History**

I began working as a part time taxi driver in 1977 I purchased a metropolitan Taxi Licence [REDACTED] in April 1987 taking out a bank loan for the then \$67,000 at this time the stipulations for purchasing a Taxi Plate Licence was that I had to sign a statutory declaration stating that it was my sole source of income. That was later changed by the GOVERNMENT so any investor could buy a plate without holding a taxi Drivers License which inflated the price of the taxi plate.

I owned and operated my taxi until 2002 then I leased the plate out because of health and family reasons. In 2005 my first marriage broke down, consequently I was forced to take out another loan to purchase my ex-wife's **half** of the Taxi Plate Licence as part of the property settlement. **The Victorian family law court deemed the Taxi Plate Licence was an asset and it was included in the property settlement by the Family Court at the value of \$360,000.** In order to retain my Taxi Plate Licence, I took out a business loan as the Bank at this time considered it to be a valuable asset. The loan was for \$187,500. In the course of the loan over 10 years I have just finished paying the loan out at a total figure of \$294,280. 1 month before the reforms commenced, reiterating; this was only for half the taxi plate. It was valued at \$480,000. Just prior to the Allan Fels reports and has now decreased to nothing.

**Note; the family court in Victoria and the Banks both considered this to be a valuable asset.**

The uncertainty of the industry to date, is forcing me as mentioned above to close my hire car business in the Macedon Ranges to go back to driving a Metro Taxi Full Time as I'm unable to lease my Taxi Plate Licence out. My wife has got her hire car on the market as there is no longer work for her car either. I'm having extreme financial difficulties, as a direct result of the changes to the industry that the government is allowing.

The loan has now finished and I needed to purchase a car to put on the license and work myself at the age of 62. I was knocked back for a loan from the Bank as my Taxi plate is now worthless and I have no other form of income.

### **Impact of Victorian Taxi and Hire Car industry reforms**

My income from my taxi has reduced significantly over the past two years. I 'm now driving a taxi full time 7 days a week and sometimes I wait in the rank at the airport for hours. As with the so called reforms the government keeps putting more and more Taxies on the road (6000 plus and more coming on the road) but the volume of work is not increasing to sustain a viable income without working long hours 7 days a week. During the many years of driving a taxi (between 1977 and 2012) I was always able to find work in the Taxi without sitting on a rank for hours on end or waiting at the airport. I have found it very difficult to find work other than driving a Taxi as that is all I have been doing for the last 35 years. I have devoted my entire life to the Taxi Industry and now THIS GOVERNMENT is letting us all down. Since the changes to the industry were announced, I have experienced a range of health issues; I now suffer from depression as I feel my life's work is all for nothing and I can never afford to retire without dignity and being a drain on government welfare. My Taxi Licence Plate was to provide an income for us when we retired now we will only have the age pension and being a burden on society instead of being self funded retirees as we had planned. My wife and I are constantly worried about money and I am now working 15 hour days to try and keep up which is also impacting on my health my marriage and my life. I'm worried about the impact this is having on our health and retirement.

### **Financial Hardship**

The transitional assistance payment given by the government was less than a ¼ of the value of the asset I had worked all my life to pay for. I have had to use this money to pay down debt, taxes and to purchase a car to put on as a Taxi so I can try to support my family. As for the Fairness Fund after having to go cap in hand and almost beg for assistance I was granted a poultry sum of \$50,000 a far cry from what I was owed. This money has also been used to pay debt and keep paying my ongoing bills associated with running a Taxi even with the reforms the depot fees of over \$700 per month to be associated with 13cabs and other related expenses have not reduced even with the influx of extra cars. In my opinion the depots are the only ones making money out of the reforms with extra cars in their fleet

If the state government had paid us market value at the time of reforms I would of been able to invest in this money in my superannuation and I would have been able to retire at the age of 67 with dignity and pay all my bills. This was our retirement plan now we will be a burden on society as baby boomers on the pension. As the government keeps changing the rules and cutting the benefits of the Pension we may well be out on the streets begging in the future.

### **Further information**

If you require further information, supporting documents or have any questions about my application please contact me via telephone on [REDACTED] or via email on [REDACTED]