**TOLD September 2018**

*Note: TOLD has now joined the national movement to fight Government (Governments) who betrayed their own small business people in order to please global, multinational company. Our new website address is now* ***told.net.au.*** *This Newsletter has 4 parts; 1. Directors action update, 2. Letter posted to all WA MPs MP, 3. Letter posted local MP, 4. Letter posted to the Premier and CC to all Legislative Council members (from Micro Business Party secretary).*

(From Directors)

As we know, the Government’s proposed legislation; compromising of both the Buyback of Taxi Plates and reforms, has passed the Legislative Assembly.

This was ALWAYS going to be (passing of the legislation) regardless of any type of concern or opposition by any other member, as the Government has the numbers. We saw exactly the same thing back in 2016, when then the Liberal Government initiated its own legislative changes.

TOLD, as well as all participants within the Taxi industry, has been trying to make the political parties and their representatives understand the following:

* The Buyback of Taxi Plates, is a re-acquisition of the Taxi Licenses, **NOT** a compensation payment.
* The Taxi Plates, have a “static” value of $290K and should be treated as such, in regard to the Buyback. This value was supported by way of an independently signed document by Ernst & Young.
* The “floor price” of $100K (proposed by Government for more than 70% owners), is an artificial value.
* The Government’s levy (that is really a tax), is a flawed model and is unworkable in an operational, practical and political manner.
* The very industry that has been affected, licenses re-acquired by Government, will become the major tax collector, by a way of licenses, fares etc.
* The industry has an alternative model for consideration which Government has not taken into consideration.
* If the Government goes ahead with its proposed BuyBack scheme for the taxi industry, then in future it is highly possible that the same approach will used by the Government to any other government regulated assets to be sold e.g. TAB, partial or full sale of Landgate, liquor licences, pharmacies etc.

As you can see, the above clearly shows, that there is only one party that will profit in more ways than one in the Buyback of the Metro Taxi Plates - THE GOVERNMENT, and all at the cost of all small business people in this state.

The Minister stated in Parliament, that the consultation and seeking of advice from industry representatives and stakeholders, conducted by the Parliamentary Representative Tony Buti and Principal Policy Advisor David Hay-Hendry, was extensive. TOLD, and the majority of the Taxi industry, hold the common view that the consultation has been very selective in who and where they sought their consultation and support from within industry. This view is also supported by the country and regional operators and their respective bodies.

This was most recently shown, in the various “adjustments” in Lifting the “Cap” on Taxi plates.

Various exemptions to whom and how the Levy and its amounts etc. are to be administered.

That the Buyback and its amounts are fair and equal for those who “choose” to take up the Buyback offer. In particular, those who have purchased their plates later than others

The Minister's recent media announcement on the steps of Parliament House, sought “endorsement” from industry. Her advisors, were able to gather 12 owners, who are to receive the higher end of Buyback. Several of these owners stated, that they were advised that in order for them to receive the amount and the Legislation to go through, they had to attend the announcement and show support for the Minister and the Proposed Bill**. This in TOLD’s view, is economic blackmail.**

As stated at the beginning and in previous newsletters, the Government has the numbers in the Lower House and may well have the numbers from both the Opposition and ex Benchers in the Upper House. The Minister has made concessions for issues raised by The Nationals, and their Spokesman, Vince Catania, has released media statements. The Nationals had been in discussions with TOLD for many weeks and were supportive of Industry's plight regarding the Buyback. However, we see that The Nationals have done a complete turnaround on their initial discussions and without offering any explanation as how this has played out are no longer offer their support.

We hear, that the Industry is in acceptance of the Proposed Bill and that the Minister has “overwhelmingly” heard from industry of its endorsement of the bill.

The Liberal Opposition Spokesperson Liza Harvey, stated, that the Liberal Party would NOT oppose the bill, as not to cause any more stress, nor any possibility of the failure of the Proposed Bill passing.

We do however have both the right to let our elected members of Parliament know, of the unfairness and repercussions of the passing of the Proposed Bill.

TOLD urges all of Industry and plate owners to continue to contact your Members of the Upper House (Legislative Council), by phone, email and in person, and to let them know of the unfairness of the Bill, and the consequences it will have to your individual circumstances if the Bill goes through as is.

There are Members of Parliament (both Houses) & and from ALL Parties that are sympathetic and understand where the industry is at and still some, that are unaware and not realise the ramifications of their acceptance to let the Proposed Bill pass.

Hansard, with reference to the most recent proceedings of the lower house

<http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/DailyTranscripts> begins with (Wednesday 13 September commencing page 51) & subsequent sitting days, both in Transcript & Vision.

Those of us that attended Parliament as far back as September 2016, meetings with then Opposition Spokesperson for Transport, Rita Saffioti at the Italian Club and Balcatta Soccer Club (Pre-Election), will recall what was said and promised by her, the current Transport Minister. Now is the time that we need to remind our members of parliament of what the Minister was saying and her promises to the Industry. We need to remind them that we will be the one who will vote for or against them in a very near future.

Regards

Directors of TOLD

*“A time will come when uber-like companies will be considered global economic terrorists. They don’t come with weapons but an artillery of money that destroys the livelihood of thousands around the world” (JG2017)*

(Letter from TOLD member to all Members of Parliament)

**UPDATE ON PERTH TAXI BUYBACK SCHEME**

I am a Perth Metro taxi plate owner and until recently an operator/driver. I’m writing in reference to a letter received from the Transport Minister by mail in September 2018 regarding the “Update on Perth Taxi Buyback Scheme”.

I want to express my concern in writing that in the update the WA Government has failed to take into account the miscalculations (shown by Ernst & Young and the Australian Taxation Office) in the Minister’s original $100000 buy back offered to me in November 2017 or the changes in the financial position of WA (improved royalty and GST revenue) since last November.  As a result I don’t agree with the statement that the WA Government has struck the right balance and find the offer presented to me to be inequitable.

The letter also contains an unveiled threat that if I don’t lobby members of the Legislative Council to vote for the bill then there will be no money forth coming to assist owners. This not only suggests a bullying culture within the current WA Government but also reeks of exasperation at trying to ram a clearly inequitable bill through the WA Parliament. It also makes me wonder how the WA Government plans to further attack my investment in the WA taxi industry if they can’t get the bill passed.

I do not believe that attacking investors in WA infrastructure particularly your own citizens and then sending unveiled threats to intimidate and cajole them to support an inequitable bill is a responsible or mature way for a Western democratic government to behave. If I was an international investor I would be particularly nervous at this state of affairs and would look to a more stable government elsewhere to put my money.

If this bill does not pass it will be because the Government has failed to adequately address the issues surrounding the buyback offer. To blame other political parties or taxi owners is not a constructive approach in dealing with this sensitive and emotional matter.

Yours faithfully,

Murray Tervey

(Letter from TOLD member to his local MP)

Dear Minister, Peter TINLEY MLA (Member for WILLAGEE)

I'm writing to you so I can express my great disappointment that since our meeting in your office after the last State elections, both my income and the asset value from the taxi plates I own have further deteriorated.

I shouldn’t need to reiterate that these plates were originally issued by the WA Government and legally acquired by me, with all required Taxes and Transfer Fees paid.

Presently, the situation is dire despite the promises and assurances given by Rita Saffioti (at the time the Shadow Minister for Transport) to us plate owners at a number of meetings. The Perth taxi industry is in tatters. Uber and other illegal ride share operators continue to systematically dismantle a legitimate enterprise, at times successfully dictating the operations of the Department of Transport and gaining favourable coverage by the local media through their corporate legal and media might. Deregulation of the taxi industry may be the easiest option but definitely will not the most pragmatic choice, and a decision that will come with significant consequences to the community.

Personally this fight has taken a great toll. I am proud of the hard work I have done and the contributions I have made to society (including the taxes I have paid over many decades). I am not a rich investor - these plates represent my retirement nest egg and have been relied on as such. This situation has been the cause of great angst to me. I believed I was investing into a safe WA Government regulated and controlled scheme – which it was at the time. Now my retirement security is in tatters. Not through greed or bad decisions, but by governmental inaction. Whilst I understand this is a situation inherited by your Government, I expect your party to do the right thing and honour the promises made prior to the election, which I believe align impeccably with the Labor Party’s “fair go” values.

Right now TOLD (the group representing legal taxi plate owners) is having great difficulty contacting Ms. Saffioti in her capacity as the Transport Minister.I respectfully ask that as my local member you plead my case on my behalf. I am relying on you and your Government to do the right thing and deliver on those promises made to us prior to the State election. I would be grateful for your acknowledgement of this email, and a plan (and timings) for appropriate actions from yourself. Should you wish to speak to me, or require any further background I am always available to assist.

Yours sincerely,

Arti Galvans . Murdoch WA

(Letter from Micro Business Party to the Premier and CC. to all members of Legislative Council)

**Honourable Mark McGowan MLA**

**Premier; Minister for Public Sector Management;**

**State Development, Jobs and Trade; Federal-State Relations**

Dear Mr McGowan,

RE: The Transport (Road Passenger Services) Bill 2018

The Micro-Business Party (MBP) was formed just prior to the last State election to give disenfranchised taxi drivers a voice in the political arena. Our base has significantly broadened since then to include all disenchanted small business owners who seek a fair go from government.

Whilst we did not realistically expect to win any seats at the 2017 election, our preferences assisted Labor to unseat three government Ministers. One of the key reasons we directed our preferences to Labor was Rita Saffioti’s promise, as then Shadow Minister for Transport, to give taxi plate owners fair compensation via:

1. A full buyback at the pre-Uber price, or
2. A partial buyback at $162,500 in a regulated transport industry.

We note that The Transport (Road Passenger Services) Bill 2018 has passed through the Legislative Assembly. Whilst we are in agreement with the majority of the proposed regulatory changes to the On Demand Transport industry, we remain dissatisfied with the buyback offer.

Many of our members face significant financial hardship, some even bankruptcy, if this Bill is passed without further amendment. Struggling small business owners who have provided faithful service to the taxi industry over several decades feel abandoned by a government which has failed to deliver on its promise to provide adequate compensation to taxi plate owners.

We are presently lobbying Senators to introduce the following amendments to the new Bill:

1. A fairer buyback figure of $162,500 for each taxi plate (in accordance with Labor’s pre-election promises).
2. Taxi plate owners to retain ownership of their taxi plates.
3. The introduction of a cap on the number of On Demand Transport licenses (in line with New York City’s recent decision to cap the overall number of ridesharing vehicles to ease vehicle congestion and reduce carbon emissions).

Whilst we accept that we can never “turn back the clock”, we would like to remind you of Labor’s pre-election promise to taxi plate owners and our preferential support of Labor during the last State elections. We appeal to your compassion and sense of fair play and we request Labor support in debating these amendments.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis, secretary

Micro Business Party

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