

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TAXI AND HIRE CAR INDUSTRY

Question asked by: Mr Rodney Barton (Member for Eastern Metropolitan)

Directed to: Minister for Public Transport

Asked on: 28 May 2019

SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION

My question today is for Minister Pulford representing the Minister for Public Transport in the other place. I ask for the urgent consideration of a solution to stop drivers touting for rides. Touting has become a massive problem in our city and at our airports. Our underpaid and stressed taxi hire car and rideshare drivers are pouncing on work like seagulls chasing hot chips at the beach. Drivers are fighting in the streets; we have videos sent to us. Laws banning touting went out with the bathwater when the taxi and hire car industry was deregulated in 2017. Touting is a serious safety issue. These touts may not be legitimate operators, and many are driving unmarked cars. Most are offering cash for rides and they are ruining Melbourne's reputation as a safe city. So, I ask the minister to give urgent consideration to reinstating the laws to make touting illegal and make sure Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria enforces it.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

I do thank the minister. The Transport Act 1983 previously contained offences relating to touting that were removed in the reforms in 2017. I am being contacted on an almost daily basis by members of the public and the industry complaining about the touts at the airport and on the streets of Melbourne. They are angry and frustrated. If you are following the rules and have been waiting in a taxi line, you see the rides getting taken away by those who may be operating illegally. We have seen drivers come to blows in the streets. A member of my team was approached twice at Melbourne Airport last week and noted at least five drivers approaching members of the public. It was most disturbing that it was young women walking off with these touts.

RESPONSE

I thank Mr Barton for his question.

I am advised that Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) has been liaising with Melbourne Airport and other stakeholders on the issue of touting. CPVV is presently gathering evidence on the extent of the problem and data on whether touters are compliant with vehicle registration and driver accreditation laws.

CPVV and the Department of Transport (Department) have provided the Minister with some preliminary advice on options for managing touting, including the option to reintroduce a touting offence. I can confirm that CPVV and the Department will be holding a series of round table conversations with industry on touting to explore these options as well as canvas other ideas for addressing the issue. These round tables will consider, among other things, how a touting offence could be constructed and whether it would be effective. I am advised the round tables are likely to commence during July/August 2019.

Members of CPVV's Industry Implementation Group were advised of the proposed work on touting at the most recent meeting held on 21 May 2019. The Industry Implementation Group were also advised of other key priorities including legal responsibilities for secondary networks, safe electronic dispatching practices and women's safety.

It is critical that if a touting offence is to be introduced that it addresses the shortcomings of previous touting offences, particularly in relation to practical enforcement. It is also important that any new offence is understood and supported by industry and does not negatively impact on legitimate commercial passenger vehicle services.

The safety of commercial passenger vehicle services remains a key priority for this government.



Hon Jaala Pulford MP

Minister for Roads

Minister for Road Safety and the TAC

Minister for Fishing and Boating