

**SMALL CHARTER VEHICLE OWNERS, LICENCE FEES**

*Motion*

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN** (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.02 pm]: I move -

That this House oppose the introduction of high licence fees on small charter vehicle owners and calls on the Minister assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to agree to meet personally with industry representatives before making a decision regarding reforms affecting their livelihoods.

The Liberal Opposition has played and will continue to play a constructive role in this issue. It is not my intention during debate this afternoon to go in boots and all for the minister or the Government for their handling of this matter. However, I will point out as objectively as possible that the industry has been somewhat hard done by, particularly over the past year. Hopefully, we will be able to demonstrate a need for some fairly urgent attention on this matter.

I commend the minister in a qualified way for agreeing to meet with the industry tomorrow afternoon. The Opposition gave notice yesterday that this matter would be raised. To put it bluntly, one reason for doing that was to force the Government's hand and to speed up the process of negotiation between the industry and the minister. By God it worked, because at 11.20 this morning the minister's office rang a representative of the industry and basically asked how quickly they could get around the table. A meeting is being organised for tomorrow.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN**: I am commending the minister for doing that. It has taken her 13 months to get directly involved, but at least she has agreed to this meeting in response to the pressure that has been brought to bear through this motion. I have commended the minister because it is a positive move. At last the industry can sit down directly with the minister and go through its concerns. An important part of this motion has been met. It is a shame that it took so long to get to this stage. I have not been a minister, but members around me who have been ministers know that to have organised a meeting like this with 27 hours notice and when Parliament is sitting indicates that this matter has been given special consideration. That is a good thing. It illustrates the fact that the Government has unfortunately allowed the matter to drag on for about 13 months.

I will go back to the beginning. An election was held last year, to which the Labor Party made a commitment to take some action on small charter vehicles. I turn to the Labor Party policy platform titled "Getting transport back on track". Under the category of "taxis", it states that Labor will -

- place a moratorium on the granting of any further Small Charter Vehicle licenses until a proper assessment of their impact on the taxi fleet is made;

That is the nub of the situation. Some concerns have been raised about vehicles with SCV plates that have been unduly interfering with the taxi trade. I have seen vehicles with SCV plates on the road from time to time, but I have not seen many. On those occasions I questioned whether those cars were appropriate for use as small charter vehicles, such as a limousine, for a special occasion. The Opposition has heard of reports, particularly from the taxi industry, that SCV operators have from time to time interfered in some way with the taxi trade, particularly in servicing the needs of passengers going to and from the airport. There probably are some problems. I do not think anyone would argue that there have been any major problems with the industry, but there might be some problems. That is clearly why the Labor Party came out with this policy to hold a moratorium on the issue of new licences and to study the impact of the SCV industry on the taxi industry. The minister should bear in mind that the election was held 13 months ago. Even after allowing a new Government some time to find its feet and to start getting its policies enacted, the minister must consider the impact that that delay has had on the industry. That 13-month delay has impacted directly on small business people in this State. A number of those people are listening in the public gallery at the moment.

Mrs Roberts: You did nothing in eight years.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN**: The minister can be rude. She will have plenty of time to speak later.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN**: If the minister wants me to get nasty, I will. I am trying to do this in a constructive way. The minister will have plenty of time to address the public gallery and members of the industry directly. She can be accountable in that way. The point is that the moratorium put in place by the Government has had a negative effect on the industry. Some people have not been able, dare I use the jargon, to grow their businesses.

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

Since the moratorium was imposed on 9 March last year, some people have been unable to consider extending their businesses and so on. It has been a direct burden on this part of the small business community.

Ms MacTiernan: So you think we should have broken our election promise?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The Government should have lived up to its election promise. The Labor Party had a policy and should have got on with it. The election was held 13 months ago. The Government said it would conduct a study. I have not seen that study. I do not know whether anyone else has seen that study. If a study has been conducted, I would love the minister to table it. I will come back to that in a minute. All the Opposition is trying to do by raising the issue in this way and at this crucial stage of the decision-making process is to make sure that the minister is aware of the outstanding concerns in the industry. I have commended the minister in a qualified way for calling the meeting tomorrow. I will be the first person to pat the minister on the back if she does the right thing by the industry and responds in a positive way today. This matter has been raised because of the perceived impact of the small charter vehicle industry on the taxi industry. I also mentioned the Labor Party policy and the fact that the current Government said it would carry out a proper assessment of the impact of SCVs on the taxi fleet. I ask the minister to advise in her reply whether that study was done. If it was done, will the minister please table a copy of it? I have spoken to people in the taxi and small charter vehicle industries. Although there have been some isolated problems, the industry does not have significant problems. More to the point, those problems can and will be quite simply resolved. During the time that these changes were contemplated a consultation process was put into effect, which has been difficult for the industry. I attended a couple of the public meetings and, to be candid, I was not impressed by the way they were conducted. The industry has responded responsibly to the changes. Frankly, it could have dug in its heels and developed a militant position. However, it has tried to work with the Department of Transport. I have dealt with some of the bureaucrats involved in the department, particularly Mr Okely. The industry worked with these officers and the consultants involved. It worked through as many of the concerns and outstanding matters as possible. It was a difficult process for people in the industry whose livelihoods are at stake. I stood up at one public meeting and said that I would have to be dragged over broken glass before I would support the initial proposal. I can understand why individual SCV owners are extremely concerned about the matter.

When the Opposition last raised this issue directly with the minister during question time, she made the point, which was somewhat valid, that the matter had not come to her for a decision. The minister indicated that she would report to the House in due course. I accept that, because it is part of the process, just as members of the Opposition question government members. I appreciate the minister's response. Obviously, at that time either the minister did not feel that she needed to be directly involved in the issue or it had not yet reached her. The reason I raise the matter now is that the minister has received recommendations from the department and a decision will need to be made.

Mrs Roberts: You are wrong again, and I will explain why when I have the opportunity.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I would be very surprised if the matter has not reached the minister's desk because I have been advised that it has been brought to the minister's attention. I have brought it to the minister's attention by raising the matter in this way, which is all well and good; we will have achieved something out of the process.

As people in this industry know, once a decision is made it is nigh on impossible to reverse on matters like this. This is a key time when government members must sit around the table and discuss the industry's concerns with it. Hopefully, in that way the minister can make a constructive decision on the matter.

Earlier, I mentioned some rather important outstanding matters. The material that the minister will be presented with shortly, if she does not already have it, will include summaries of the industry's response to the consultation process. I ask that the minister carefully consider the tables showing a summary of submissions by SCV owners. I have a copy in front of me. On face value it does not look too bad. It shows that a significant percentage of SCV owners agree with the reforms, particularly the hourly fees and some other matters. Most of the tables indicate that about a quarter of owners agree with the reforms and others would agree to the reforms with some qualifications. I urge the minister to consider that in detail. She will find that of the 550 SCVs in the State -

Mrs Roberts: There are 533 SCV operators.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I thank the minister for giving me the precise figure. The department's information indicates that there are 550 SCVs. Obviously the information has been updated or some people have left the industry.

Of the 530 or thereabouts operators, only 47 responded to this survey. The minister should not be fooled by the type of figures that might be made available. That is why it is important that tomorrow the minister talk directly

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

to people in the industry, particularly the representatives of the wedding car operators and SCV operators generally.

On 24 March, a submission was presented from the Small Charter Vehicle Association of Western Australia. I will not go through all its contents; however, I will touch on a couple of main sticking points about which I am sure the industry would like to talk to the minister. The first point relates to the proposal by the department for a \$600 licensing fee. I would be delighted if the minister could advise me that that proposal had been canned. She could do it by interjection or when she responds; this is the main bone of contention.

Mrs Roberts: Is that the Liberal Party's position on licence fees?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: There is no way we support a 3 500 per cent increase in the licence fee.

Mrs Roberts: Often the member has one position and the Liberal Party has another.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I sometimes wonder where members opposite park their spaceship.

Without a doubt, this is the most important concern for the industry. There are different ways to consider licensing in this field. For example, in New South Wales, the equivalent of the SCV operators are charged approximately \$1 800 a year. However, it is a very different kettle of fish.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: This is what the parliamentary process is for. I will accept the minister's word that the figure is \$8 000 in New South Wales. However, the Government of New South Wales limits the number of plates it issues. Around 450 SCV owners operate in Sydney. If I were in the industry and someone told me that I could be guaranteed a four-hundred-and-fiftieth share of the market in Sydney for \$8 000 a year, I might say, "Wow". However, that is not what the industry or the Opposition wants. We have a good, competitive industry. Before the moratorium there were few barriers to entry. People were able to do the hard yards and invest money in cars and vehicles to operate SCVs. Today I spoke to some people from the industry, and I was told that one relatively new vehicle cost around \$200 000. A typical capital outlay on a good stretch limousine is between \$100 000 and \$160 000.

Previously, people took risks to get into the industry. They decided to set up businesses and build them up. That is the basis of free enterprise and small business. That is what we are on about. I believe that most people, even on the government side of the House, support those principles. The member for Ballajura is one of the few members of the Labor Party who was involved in business before he entered Parliament. I am sure that members on that side would support those types of principles.

This is a good, competitive industry. Let us help that industry to thrive. Imposing a \$600 fee, when the industry currently pays as little as \$17, is not the way to do it. I will not go through all of the detail of the industry's submission. The minister has good briefing notes and she will talk to members of the industry tomorrow. I plead with the minister to not be fooled by departmental people who tell her that taxi operators pay a lot of money and, therefore, the SCV operators should also. I do not have to tell the minister that the taxi industry is totally different from the SCV industry. I will not go through all the points raised in the industry submission because members of that industry will have ample opportunity to do that later.

What is this fee for? According to the bureaucrats who were running the meetings to which I have referred, there is a need for additional inspectors to more vigorously police the industry. When the bureaucrats start to talk about employing two more inspectors for the 350 SCV businesses in the State, one must wonder how much policing is needed? It has not been proven that there are endemic problems in the industry. I have been told that there are a few isolated problems. However, once the vehicle classifications are sorted out so that a person cannot use an old Toyota Corolla as an SCV and those types of vehicles are phased out, the industry will regulate itself. We do not need police or inspectors to tell small charter vehicle operators to keep their vehicles clean or in good order; natural competition will do that. If I drive an SCV and I do not keep it in good order, sure as apples I will not be able to rent it out. People do not just hail a SCV from the side of the road; they are booked in advance. Much of an SCV's business is word of mouth. People use an SCV for a wedding or whatever and then recommend that operator. Others might want to hire a particular type of car, such as a vintage car or a souped up Ford LTD. The SCV industry is totally different from the taxi industry.

Vehicle classifications will solve the problems without the introduction of inspectors or a \$600 levy. The department currently has a policing role and it performs that role well. Some people have complained about over-regulation in the areas of window tinting and the like. However, broadly speaking, the bureaucratic structure is in place and the extra money is not needed.

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

The industry has been very reasonable about licensing fees. It has agreed to pay the same fee as taxis and, therefore, has taken a measured approach to the matter. At tomorrow's meeting other matters will be raised, and a number of points have already been set out in the industry's submission. It wants to finalise the exact amount for minimum hourly rates. There is a strong argument that wedding cars should be treated in a different way, as is the case in other States. Also, the industry would like to have use of the busway. I understand that the minister has given her approval for taxis to use the new busway. That is tremendous, and nobody on this side of the House would disagree with that move. I commend the minister for making the right decision.

Mrs Roberts: The use of the busway will be extended to prisoner transport vehicles.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is an excellent idea. Please extend the same privilege to the SCV operators. This matter is important when it comes to promoting tourism in this State, particularly when the convention centre gets up and running. A nice positive approach towards the industry will bear good rewards.

The industry might be a bit reticent about the issue I am about to raise, because it does not want to pit SCV operators against taxis operators. However, the taxi industry runs the silver service, and if the minister introduces regulations for SCV operators, they should also extend to the silver service group, because, in effect, that group is also a SCV operation. I have used them, and they are a good, capable and prompt organisation.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I believe it is a silver service, but I will stand corrected.

In a nutshell, that is a potted history of the matter. I am interested to know whether an impact survey of the SCV and taxi industries was undertaken. I alluded to the Labor Party's policy platform, but that is not the only time this has been mentioned. On 6 November, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure again referred to a review that had been carried out to ascertain the impact of SCV's upon the taxi industry. I would be grateful if the minister would tell us a bit about the review and respond to some of the specific points that have been raised. We ask that a quick decision be made and that the idea of a \$600 licence fee be scrapped. That is the key bone of contention. It would be great if the minister could go to the meeting tomorrow and inform the industry that she will cancel the \$600 fee, and make it \$85. We also ask that the minister be constructive in her talks with the industry about other matters that will be raised. We are talking about the essence of small business. We are talking about people who have risked their money to establish, buy and expand businesses. Their livelihoods are at stake, and rest upon the minister's shoulders. Today at Parliament House, I spoke to an operator of an SCV. She told me that if the \$600 fee is introduced, she will be out of business. The minister may ask how a \$600 fee could put someone out of business. She must try to understand that many people in the industry operate only on weekends. They may even operate for only six months of the year. If the \$600 fee is introduced, SCV businesses could be seriously impacted upon, even forced to close down. I will be the first to commend the minister if she responds by saying that she will dump the \$600 fee, and that she will go through the other matters. It is unfortunate that it has taken the action that we saw at Parliament today to bring this matter to a head. We ask the minister to please do the right thing.

*Amendment to Motion*

**MRS ROBERTS** (Midland - Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [4.25 pm]: I move -

To delete all words after "House" and substitute the following -

supports the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in developing an improved regulatory framework for the small charter vehicle (SCV) industry. This process has involved extensive consultation with the industry and has received general support. The proposed regulatory changes will raise the vehicle standard to limousine category with a higher level of overall safety. The package also includes an appropriate licence fee reflecting increased enforcement and compliance measures to maintain standards. The fee proposed by DPI would add \$12 per week to operators' costs in this luxury vehicle market. This House notes that the minister has agreed to meet with representatives of the SCV and wedding car industry associations.

In moving that amendment, I thank the member for Mitchell for raising this important matter. I appreciate the opportunity to bring members up-to-date on the progress of the SCV reforms, which were left unattended by the former Government. This is another example of how the inaction of the former Government has impacted upon an important section of the public transport industry - the taxi industry - and has left it uncertain about its future. The taxi industry has a right to be concerned that its livelihood could be affected by the lack of clear differentiation between small charter vehicle services and the traditional services that are provided on a day-to-

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

day basis. Just as appallingly, the former Government's inaction has also allowed the standards and values of many genuine and committed SCV operators to be compromised.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: I have a number of facts that the member for Mitchell has asked me to address -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): The minister has the floor, and the interjections across the Chamber are disorderly.

Mrs ROBERTS: Unlike some members opposite, I like to refer to facts during the course of presenting material to the House.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: It is intolerable to have the inane and continuous interjections from the member for Hillarys. His arguments make no sense, and he repeats his interjections. Mr Acting Speaker, I ask you to call the member to order if he continues the same repetitious interjections.

The SCV industry has 533 licensed vehicles on the road, which are operated by 378 licence holders. These operators have a right to be identified as providing special services in the market, with luxury-type vehicles that are clearly different from the standard taxi service.

We must have a look at the history of this matter. SCVs were first introduced in 1995, and replaced a small number of licensed private taxis. The move was planned to provide greater choice of luxury-type vehicles and to introduce a licensing system for wedding car operators. It was always intended that a clear distinction between the traditional taxi business and the services offered by operators of luxury-type vehicles, such as limousines, would be maintained. One of the key reasons for this is that entry into the SCV industry is unrestricted - there are no plate fees. This is in comparison with the taxi industry, in which numbers are limited and there is a substantial fee. The fee for a taxi plate is currently \$190 000. That fee entitles the taxi industry to provide a 24-hour service at any location. Taxis provide a day-to-day service and can be hailed at any time. In contrast, small charter vehicle operators do not pay a plate fee and they work in a different market. Regrettably, the former Government did not set up any vehicle standards to define the SCV industry. This has resulted in almost any sort of vehicle being issued with SCV plates from Ford Escorts to ageing Holden Commodores and Ford Falcons. These are hardly luxury-type vehicles. Added to this is the increasing number of reports we are receiving that some SCV operators are cutting their charges well below the regulated fees and competing directly with the taxi industry. This is certainly not acceptable and we do not believe it was the intention when SCVs were introduced. Yet, the Government inherited this situation and, as promised in its election platform, it is taking action to address the problems that have been identified. This Government came to power with a commitment to place a moratorium on the granting of any further small charter vehicle licences until a proper assessment of their impact on the taxi industry was made and it could be ensured that operators of small charter vehicles would abide by their licence conditions. Following the Government's election, it introduced a moratorium on small charter vehicles and this has been in place since March 2001. Since then, it has been carrying out extensive consultations with key stakeholders and reviewing the SCV industry. I note that the member for Mitchell said that he attended a couple of those consultations. I am now pleased to advise the House that the review has been completed and I am expecting a formal report from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure within the next week. This will include a range of recommendations for change. I also understand that all but one of these recommendations have received support from key representative groups in the industry. The consultation process included four public forums, the production and circulation of two discussion papers, submissions from industry and numerous meetings with operators, including members of the Small Charter Vehicle Association of Western Australia and the Wedding Car Owners Association.

I will now outline some of the changes that have been proposed as a result of that process. Concerns have been raised with my office that some SCV operators are charging well below the regulated rates for their vehicles. During recent meetings that we have held, the industry has supported the introduction of a two-tier fare structure based on the number of passengers a vehicle can carry and the proposed rates. The proposal is to have a minimum hourly fare of \$55 for vehicles with five or fewer passenger seats, with a minimum charge of \$55 per hire; the current rate is \$43.70. For vehicles with more than five passenger seats, the minimum hire proposed will be \$77 an hour for the first two hours. It would then reduce to the minimum fare rate of \$55 an hour. It is also proposed to adjust the minimum fare annually in line with the consumer price index. Although we have reached agreement on most aspects of the work that has been going on, the one area of the reform package that has not been agreed to by industry is the proposal to increase the annual licence fee. It is believed that a \$600 annual fee is appropriate, which is less than \$12 a week. We are dealing with a luxury vehicle service. The problem, however, is that the current annual licence fee is a mere \$4.25 per passenger seat. This amounts to an

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

annual fee of between \$17 and \$43. Members should bear in mind that taxi owners currently pay \$190 000 just to enter the taxi industry in Perth, but SCV operators do not pay a plate fee to enter their industry. The current amount of between \$17 and \$43 that SCV operators pay each year does not come close to covering the costs involved in licensing and ensuring the on-road compliance of the SCV industry. If we do not cover that cost, the choice is then to ask other taxpayers to meet it. The fees being proposed have been based on the direct costs involved in licensing and monitoring compliance under the standards of the SCV industry. It will also cover the cost of putting two inspectors on the road to ensure that the SCV industry operators maintain high standards of vehicle safety. The fee proposed is significantly lower than fees in other States. For example, South Australia, which has a comparable SCV industry, charges more than \$1 200 a year, which is double what the Department for Planning and Infrastructure is proposing. It must also be realised that this industry exists because it offers something special and it relies on having the highest level of service and vehicles. It is understandable that one of the major concerns expressed to my office is that some operators are using substandard, poorly maintained vehicles that are not luxury or limousine-style cars. SCV operators have overwhelmingly supported the proposal that their vehicles should be better than those available as taxis.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: You are missing the important point.

Mrs ROBERTS: No, the member is interjecting inanely and should wait until it is her turn to speak.

We are considering the establishment of four vehicle categories to ensure that this is achieved.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): Order, members!

Mrs ROBERTS: The member for Mitchell has asked for information and I would like to provide it to the House.

The four categories that we are considering are: luxury vehicles at the top of the range, which include vehicles such as Rolls Royces and Mercedes; the more general, up-market vehicles such as Holden Statesmans and Ford LTDs; luxury people movers, such as Toyota Taragos and Chrysler Voyagers; and stretch versions of these vehicles and classic vehicles, which are vehicles over 25 years old. Age limits will also be set for most of these vehicles and minimum safety standards will be introduced. This will ensure that SCVs are the luxury vehicles that people expect when they hire them and that they are maintained to the highest standards. Members should keep in mind that the very people we want to protect are the members of the public of Western Australia who utilise these vehicles.

The reforms being proposed have benefits for the public, the taxi industry and for SCV operators. Importantly, for members of the public the reforms will ensure that the vehicles they are travelling in meet all the standards required for this service, just as standards are required for other public transport vehicles. We are not talking about vehicles that are used by only the very wealthy or corporate executives. These vehicles are special and more people are using them for special occasions. From the perspective of the SCV industry, there will be a clear distinction between its services and those provided by the taxi industry. The SCV industry will be protected from unlicensed, substandard operators who tarnish the good name of the industry. People from the SCV industry have approached me saying that unlicensed people are on the road competing with them and not maintaining standards or charging appropriate fees, and that these people are giving the industry a bad name.

Finally, these changes will resolve the problems that have caused so much angst in the taxi industry and that have resulted in so much ill will between the taxi and SCV industries. Shortly, I will be meeting with the industry to finalise the implementation of the SCV reforms. I look forward to having a constructive meeting with the industry, and I thank members of that industry for the representations that they have made via correspondence to my office and as part of the consultation process. The final decision will create a win, win situation and, as someone said the other day, it will be a “www.situation”; that is, it will be a win for the public, for taxi drivers and for the SCV industry.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Could you at least tell us if a study was done of the impact of SCVs on the taxi industry?

Mrs ROBERTS: I advised the member in the answer to his question in November that I was reviewing the situation, and that is what we undertook to do. I never proposed to put out a final report or to undertake a final study. Before the election we were certainly aware of the problems in the industry and the Department of Transport has provided extensive details about the issues between the taxi and the SCV industries. On that basis, we consulted with the industry and I will be receiving a report.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: You were going to put out a report on the impact of the SCV industry on the taxi industry. You have stuffed this industry around for a year now because of that election promise. Your answer on 6 November referred to the review of the impact of SCVs on the taxi industry.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is exactly what we have done.

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Then table a copy of the review.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I cannot hear the minister speaking. All I can hear is members on both sides interjecting willy-nilly. I need to listen to the minister. Perhaps we could have one interjection at a time.

Mrs ROBERTS: This is a simple case of members not being able to understand plain English. I committed to a review, and it has been conducted. As I said, a report based on that review will be forwarded to me within the next week. We have reviewed the industry. We knew what the problems were and we obtained further reports from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. On that basis and on the basis of industry consultation, a report, including recommendations, will be forwarded to me next week. I will then consider it. In the meantime, I will meet with the industry.

From 1995, the former Government let the industry carry on without any regulations or controls. It let the small vehicle charter industry compete with the taxi industry for bread and butter work. People pay \$190 000 to obtain a taxi plate that will enable them to do that bread and butter work of taking people from A to B. Under the previous Government, anyone could get an SCV licence.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: We have worked with the industry to get the right result.

Mrs ROBERTS: That demonstrates the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's ignorance. That is exactly what the Government has been doing. The fee proposed by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure does not include any corporate overheads or extras. It will cover only what the industry has requested.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Are they asking for more inspectors?

Mrs ROBERTS: Yes. They want compliance inspections.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: How many requests have you had?

Mrs ROBERTS: We have had a number of -

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: It aggravates opposition members that, unlike them, members on this side consult with industry. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was invited to participate in the consultation process. He has had his say today. I will meet with the industry -

Mr Barron-Sullivan: I was not invited; I barged my way in.

Several members interjected.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: We do not get invitations to government functions.

Several members interjected.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: I should not say that; that was unfair of me. I was invited by industry representatives.

Mrs ROBERTS: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition improved his manners he would be invited to more functions. It galls members opposite that, unlike the previous Government -

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth to order.

Mrs ROBERTS: The previous Government let things meander along after 1995. It was not as though that did not have consequences - it had consequences for the taxi industry, the small charter vehicle industry and the travelling public. People using vehicles licensed to carry passengers in Western Australia expect certain standards to be met. At the end of the day, someone must pay for the service to be licensed. The Government is not proposing any tax or to cover the Department for Planning and Infrastructure's overheads. The fee will cover the cost of administering the service.

I am more than happy to meet with industry representatives. The consultation process has been long and extensive. The Government wants a process that is fair for the industry. It also does not want unscrupulous operators. It wants the SCV industry to have integrity. The \$600 fee will cost operators \$12 a week. Some operators in the SCV industry have suggested that, if operators cannot afford to pay \$12 a week to ensure compliance and to protect their industry, perhaps they should not be in the business.

**MS HODSON-THOMAS** (Carine) [4.45 pm]: I rise to speak against the minister's amendment. I am very disappointed. I thought the minister would show better judgment. The Leader of the Opposition extended his -

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

Mr Hyde: Has there been a coup? You've let it slip.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: I meant the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

I find it extraordinary that this debate has degenerated to such an extent that the minister has missed a very important point. I thought she would use her better judgment in dealing with this issue. She has said that the industry has accepted all but one of the proposals and reforms. The one sticking point is the \$600 fee.

Mrs Roberts: That is right.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: Surely the fact that the industry has agreed that a number of vehicles on the road should not be there tells the minister that it wants -

Mrs Roberts: Why not ask taxi drivers whether they would like their \$190 000 back? Ask people whether they want to pay a fee.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I realise that questions are being asked backwards and forwards. Unless they are directed through the Chair, the debate becomes a free-for-all. The member for Carine has the call.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: I am happy to take interjections from the minister. However, I will remind her of some of the concerns that consumers have raised with me. A number of people living in the outer suburbs, in places like the Swan Valley and the outer southern suburbs, often call for cabs but cannot get them. How do we address that? Small charter vehicle operators often pick up -

Ms MacTiernan: So they do the work of taxis. Is that what you are saying?

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: No.

Ms MacTiernan: That is what it sounds like.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: Those who live in outer suburbs who cannot access taxis should be able to ring a small charter vehicle operator and arrange to be collected from a function -

Mrs Roberts: Is that the Liberal Party's policy?

Mr Barron-Sullivan: The member for Carine is saying that if the matter were handled properly the two industries could complement each other.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: Of course they could. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has made a valid point. The SCV industry is prepared to work with the taxi industry. The minister outlined that in the speech notes she provided. She read her speech.

I met some small charter vehicle operators today outside this place. They are in the gallery observing this debate. They are very passionate about their vehicles. They maintain them to the highest standard, because presentation is obviously imperative in ensuring customer satisfaction and continuing demand.

One couple I met today told me about their stretch FJ Holden. It is the only one of its kind in Australia. It is an icon vehicle and it cost them \$140 000 to put it on the road. It is a spotless vehicle. Obviously they are in the market to provide transport for weddings and similar functions. I am sure any young bride and groom - or any older bride and groom; I do not want to discriminate -

Several members interjected.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: All of us at some stage could be planning to marry -

Mr Templeman: Is there something you want to share with us?

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: There is nothing I want to share with the member for Mandurah.

Any young couple planning to marry would be very lucky to be transported to and from their reception in that wonderful vehicle. Obviously, many stretched limousines are available to be used to transport young and old people to wedding ceremonies. These SCV operators are passionate about their vehicles. Quite apart from anything else, it is not their core business; it is something they love to do. For the most part, they are not operating every day of the week; they might be fortunate to operate two weekends a month or maybe six months a year. They are being discriminated against in an unfair and unreasonable way. The minister has said that the industry has agreed to virtually all of these proposals, apart from the \$600 fee. These operators are not suggesting that they are not prepared to pay a fee; they are asking for a fair and reasonable fee. That is the point the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was embarking on when he began this debate earlier today. He asked the minister to use her better judgment. I know that she is quite competent and capable of doing that.



Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

Mr Hyde: At what level would you set the fee?

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: I am not in government; members opposite are and the minister can respond.

Mr Hyde: You are taking the view that \$600 is too much. Tell us what it should be.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: It should be a determination between the minister and the small charter vehicle group when they meet tomorrow. We are very pleased that the minister is meeting with the industry body.

Mr Hyde: \$500?

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: I am not even going to entertain the member's comments. I know that other members would like an opportunity to speak, so I will finish my comments by asking the minister to use her better judgment in a pragmatic approach with the industry.

**MS MacTIERNAN** (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [4.51 pm]: I support the amendment moved by the minister assisting me.

Several members interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: We have 14 ministers as opposed to the 17 the Liberal Party had when in government. We are more than pulling our weight.

I will make a couple of comments in support of the minister. We recognise that the moratorium has placed some disability on parts of the industry. Some members of the small charter vehicle industry want to reconfigure their fleets. Groups of operators have contacted us and have indicated that they have concerns. However, there have been some positives for the small charter vehicle industry in that it has put a lid on the number of new entrants into the industry, and that has been of some benefit to those players.

We need to make clear a couple of key issues and a couple of ways in which the Opposition has been led into error on this matter. First, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that small charter vehicles service a completely distinct market from that serviced by the taxi industry. We heard the opposite view from the opposition spokesperson on transport, who put the view that one of the benefits of the small charter vehicle industry was that it picked up some of the work of the taxi industry. Setting aside that little vignette of conflict in the party opposite, I will address the issue of the degree to which the industry has been in competition with the taxi industry. I am not in any way suggesting that those people whom one might call the industry leaders are those who want to take the standard bread-and-butter work from the taxi industry. However, the figures speak for themselves. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made the very interesting comment that Sydney - which I think has a population of about four million people - has a total of 400 small charter vehicles; however, Perth, with a population of 1.3 million people, has 530 small charter vehicles. What does that say to members? Does that say that people in Western Australia are much more inclined to travel in limousines? No; it demonstrates what the previous Government really tried to do.

This is a crucial point, and it explains why we had to proceed with the moratorium. This was an attempt by a former Minister for Transport to effectively deregulate the taxi industry. He was not about getting a better deal for small charter vehicle operators; he was about deregulating the taxi industry. He was going to do it by stealth by allowing small charter vehicles to have a particular regulatory regime, a fee structure, which gave them an enormous advantage over taxi operators. That was very destructive from the public's point of view. Not only did it make it very hard for taxi drivers - the level of income for taxi drivers absolutely plummeted - but also the capacity of the then Government, and now for the current Government, to put on additional taxis to meet demand during peak periods was severely undermined. Much of that bread-and-butter work had been gobbled up by some - not all - of the small charter vehicle operators. I know that some small charter vehicle operators - I do not know whether they are in the gallery - share these concerns.

When I was in Opposition, a number of operators contacted me and explained their concern that many small charter vehicle operators were not doing the right thing and were entering into all sorts of arrangements with hotels, for example, in which they could effectively get around the supposed limit of an hourly charge. There were a variety of ways in which some small charter vehicle operators - not the ones who drive the specialist, luxury or classic vehicles - were effectively doing that job. They picked up people from hotels and took them to the airport. The taxi industry lost some of the best work it had; that is, the work that provided its bread and butter and that enabled them to service people at Rendezvous Observation City Hotel at 11 o'clock on a Saturday night. It allowed charter vehicle operators to take from taxi operators the good work during the day of picking up the fly in, fly out workers - a very important part of the taxi industry. This was about a former Minister for Transport - that is, two transport ministers ago -

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

Mr Barron-Sullivan interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The figures speak for themselves. Perth now has 530 small charter vehicles - half the number of taxis. Members opposite cannot pretend that this was anything other than an attempt to undermine the taxi industry. The philosophy of deregulation drove the previous Government and often caused a great deal of damage, which we must now step in to repair. We regret the inconvenience and the difficulties that this has imposed on the small charter vehicle industry. However, it was because of the negligent and deceitful way that the previous Government effectively tried to deregulate the taxi industry. I am very pleased with the recommendations that are being made. I totally support the minister assisting me. I want to talk about the fee of \$600, which the Opposition says is so unreasonable.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Is it per operator or per vehicle?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I understand that it is per vehicle. I do not believe that the fee is unreasonable. For many years the taxi industry has been paying its own way; it covers the cost of the taxi unit.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Taxi operators pay \$85.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not understand. How much time has he spent talking to people in the taxi industry? How aware is he of their issues? Is he aware that the taxi unit is funded by taxi licence plate fees, which are charged when a new plate is released? Those fees go into the pot. There is no equivalent for small charter vehicles. There is also a fee when a taxi licence plate is transferred. As the minister assisting has said, those plate transfers produced in the order of \$180 000 or \$190 000 a year.

The Government wants a level playing field. We are saying to small charter vehicle operators that they need to come on board and pay their way in the same way as the taxi industry does. We have heard from the member for Carine that the small charter vehicle operators have said that they will agree to everything else. One of the things that they have agreed to is raising the bar or standard significantly. It would see about 150 vehicles go out of the industry, which would reduce competition. Therefore, overall impact of the fee on those remaining in the industry would be minimal. The taxi industry has a user-pay philosophy, and we need a user-pay philosophy for the small charter vehicle industry. Our proposals will put the industry on a much sounder basis. They will ensure that it is the specialist industry that it is supposed to be and not a semi-deregulation of the taxi industry.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Do you make the final decision or does the other minister?

Ms MacTIERNAN: The Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is responsible for making the decision. We have worked together on this. I know how difficult it is for the mob on the other side - I use the word "mob" advisedly, they find it so difficult to work together - when X hates Y and Y hates Z, and they will not work together. We have worked together on this and come up with a set of proposals that I totally support. It will be the responsibility of the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, but I can assure the minister assisting and the Opposition that I support 100 per cent the proposals that she will shortly be considering.

**MR O'GORMAN** (Joondalup) [5.03 pm]: I agree with the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and support the amendment.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: You support the \$600 fee?

Mr Johnson: As opposed to \$85 for taxis?

Mr O'GORMAN: Do members opposite want me to speak?

I will clarify a few issues. In 1995 a small number of operators were hiring vehicles with a private taxi plate. This position changed under the former Government in 1995 when it introduced the small charter vehicle system. No regulations were in place at that time to govern how the system would work. The regulations were brought into being under the Transport Co-ordination Act and allowed for a fee of \$4.25 per seat, which was based on fees for a bus that has normally somewhere between 40 and 70 seats. That is a reasonable levy for a bus. The small charter vehicle industry and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure have agreed as a result of negotiations that the standard of vehicles that they are operating should be raised. There has been no regulation for vehicles entering the market. Someone could have used a Toyota Corolla. My daughter could have registered her Toyota Starlet as a small charter vehicle. I am sure it is not the intention of those people in the gallery to operate Toyota Starlet-type vehicles as small charter vehicles. I am sure they want to raise the standards so that a limousine or luxury-type vehicle is used. I agree with them and applaud them for lifting the standards in line with community demands.

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

A two-tier minimum fare structure was discussed and agreed; that is, a \$55 minimum fare for the first hour for a vehicle with less than five passenger seats. That seems reasonable, because it would distinguish the small charter vehicle industry from the taxi industry. A taxi from somewhere like Victoria Park to Perth Airport would cost about \$10 or \$15, whereas a small charter vehicle would cost \$55 because that is the cost of an hour's minimum hire. I applaud those in the small charter vehicle industry for the intelligent way in which they have approached negotiations.

Another aspect of the two-tier minimum fare structure is a minimum fee of \$77 for the first two hours for vehicles that carry more than five passengers. I am presuming that this refers to Tarago-type vehicles or Voyager-type vehicles, which would move small charter vehicle operators away from taxi drivers who are paying a \$190 000 licence fee and then annual fees on top of that.

Small charter vehicle operators have agreed to vehicle safety and maintenance standards. A small charter vehicle could be licensed and have no safety and maintenance standard. After a period, the vehicle could develop faulty brakes, which would mean that there could be lots of substandard vehicles on the road. We do not want that, especially if we take into account the people who hire these vehicles. The people who hire these vehicles are not very important people or very wealthy people. Lots of year 12 students hire these vehicles regularly to go to their school balls. I hired a vehicle this year for my daughter to go to her school ball. I was happy to know that the vehicle was very safe because the operator from whom I hired the vehicle is known to me and maintains his vehicle to a very high standard. I was not around on the night of the ball, so I did not see the vehicle, but from the reports of my wife and my daughter, it seems it was a very well turned out vehicle and nothing less than they expected. An unscrupulous operator could have sent a fairly basic vehicle that did not comply with maintenance standards. How do we make sure that maintenance standards are complied with? We cannot rely on the industry, because the industry is there to make a profit. If operators are not making a profit, there is no point in their being in the business in the first place. To ensure that standards are maintained, we need to employ inspectors.

Mr Bradshaw: More bureaucracy; that is the way to go. Members over there love it.

Mr O'GORMAN: We saw the results of unregulated business with finance brokers. Does the Opposition want to do the same thing with small charter vehicles, and have an unregulated industry and accidents on the road in which children who are going to school balls get hurt? Unscrupulous operators might not be properly licensed and insured. If they are not insured, people cannot claim. The Opposition is very good at regulating industry to push unions out but it does not like it when we regulate industry.

At the moment small charter vehicles are inspected once a year. We are suggesting that, in addition, on-road monitors who are mechanics should check the vehicles, assist people and maybe make recommendations that they upgrade their vehicles. Those monitors would also be trained in customer service and would provide an advisory service to small charter vehicle operators. It would not simply be a case of their coming around and pushing the operators into doing things. They would be able to offer advice. That is a good initiative. The monitors would also be able to prosecute unscrupulous operators, which is also great. If an operator put a driver without a proper F-class licence behind a wheel, he would void his insurance. If there were a crash and people were injured, the insurance would be null and void. The four or five victims in the back of the car would have no opportunity for compensation. This move is a good step forward.

We are not doing anything to persecute this industry; we are simply asking it to pay an annual \$600 fee for each vehicle. That \$600 will cover the enforcement of the regulations. Members opposite keep throwing at us the statement that not many government members have been in business. However, we do not need to have been in business to figure out some of the things that are needed to operate a business. Someone who operates a business wants to make a profit. He must calculate his fixed costs and variable costs and then factor in his margin. The Government will not add to the fixed costs. We are taking over some of the variable costs and charging them to the industry. The cost of corporate administration, offices and lease payments for those offices in which to conduct the administration of the small charter vehicle industry will be absorbed by the Government. The operators are not being asked to unduly support a bureaucracy. They are being asked only to cover the cost of providing the service on the road. That is a good thing.

We are not overly regulating the SCV industry but lifting the bar considerably so that the reputable operators in that industry can grow their businesses. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that 533 operators are in the industry and that 150 of those might be lost as a result of these regulations. The moratorium on an increase in SCV licences has impeded the growth of the industry. If 150 operators drop out of the industry, some of the reputable operators - I am sure there are many - will be able to pick up those licences. I assume that after the regulations come into force, the moratorium will be lifted. The reputable operators will be able to grow their businesses, and hopefully they will. I hope the person I have dealt with in the past grows his business. I have

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

seen some of his vehicles in advertising, and my family has given me reports about how well they are presented. I hope that that sort of person manages to grow his business and that we keep the unscrupulous operators out of the small charter vehicle industry.

Some of the other people we want to keep out of this industry are those who have cottoned on to the fact that it costs virtually nothing to license a vehicle, as long as the owner has an F-class licence and pays the insurance. Someone might have a roadworthy Ford Escort which he licenses as a small charter vehicle and uses to run the odd trip on a Friday or Saturday night to a ball or the pub or whatever for a \$50 fee. Those people are pinching business from the reputable operators, because they are doing that work not to grow the industry but to get some extra pocket money. They are not relying on that work to feed their families or anything like that. They are taking business away from those operators who need it to feed their families.

I support the minister's amendment. It is good that we have taken an unregulated industry and, with the cooperation of and consultation with that industry, managed to come up with some decent regulations.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN** (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.14 pm]: I make it clear that the Liberal Opposition will not support the amendment. I point out that both the transport ministers have indicated that there are problems in the small charter vehicle industry. In fact, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure almost went so far as to indicate that something is terribly wrong within the industry. Yet, both ministers have in effect admitted that there has been no objective analysis of the situation and that the Government has not lived up to its election commitment to carry out a study of the impact of the SCV industry on the taxi industry. In other words, they are arguing from a baseless position.

We have also had confirmation that the fee will be applied on a per vehicle rather than a per operator basis. I suggest members should look closely at the wording of the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's amendment, part of which states -

The fee proposed by DPI would add \$12 per week to operators' cost . . .

Many operators have more than one vehicle. It is not uncommon for operators running a wedding service to have two or three vehicles. The new fee will add more than \$12 a week to their costs. Although \$12 or \$24 does not sound like a lot, \$1 200 is a large burden. Further, the operators will not pay this fee on a weekly basis.

We heard all about the situation in New South Wales. The New South Wales industry bears no resemblance to the industry in this State. The industry in this State has more in common with that in Victoria. The Labor Premier in Victoria charges SCV operators \$120. The minister talked about the industry in New South Wales; it is a totally different kettle of fish. She went on about the taxi industry. That also is a different kettle of fish. She will not look at comparable situations. Members, particularly those in the cabbage patch at the back, should note that this amendment is incorrect. We are not talking about an extra \$12 a week.

I leave government members with this thought: when this is over, I will write to every single SCV owner in the metropolitan area and tell them how the government members voted in this debate. I will tell them how its northern suburbs members voted.

Mr Whitely interjected.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I will also write to the ones in the hills, where the member for Roleystone is based. I will write to the operators in Perth. I will let them know where government members stand on this. It is clear that the two ministers have made up their minds. The Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, B2, kept looking at B1 for approval and to see if she was saying the right thing.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I would not get like this if I thought the minister was going to be constructive about the matter and give the operators a fair go. She calls this an appropriate licence fee and claims it will cost only \$12 a week. She has made up her mind and is casting the industry aside.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): Members!

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: If government members vote for this amendment, they will, in effect, be supporting a \$600 fee for SCV operators. That represents a 3 500 per cent increase for every licence for every car in that industry. We will not support that. We will vote against this amendment. This debate is futile because the transport ministers have made up their minds. It is unfortunate that the backbench of the Labor Party has not been told what this is about. Those members should have been on the front steps of Parliament House earlier

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

today and talked to the members of the industry. They should do the right thing rather than toe the party line. They should start thinking for themselves and standing up for the community.

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [5.17 pm]: I move -

That the question be now put.

Several members interjected.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (16)

Mr Barnett	Mr Edwards	Mr McNee	Mr Barron-Sullivan
Mr Birney	Ms Hodson-Thomas	Mr Marshall	Mr Sweetman
Mr Day	Mr House	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mrs Edwardes	Mr Johnson	Mr Omodei	Mr Bradshaw ( <i>Teller</i> )

Noes (28)

Mr Andrews	Mr Hill	Mr McGowan	Mr Ripper
Mr Bowler	Mr Hyde	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Brown	Mr Kobelke	Mr Marlborough	Mr Templeman
Mr D'Orazio	Mr Kucera	Mrs Martin	Mr Watson
Dr Edwards	Mr Logan	Mr Murray	Mr Whitely
Dr Gallop	Ms MacTiernan	Mr O'Gorman	Dr Woollard
Ms Guise	Mr McGinty	Mr Quigley	Ms Quirk ( <i>Teller</i> )

---

Pairs

Mr Waldron	Ms McHale
Mr Grylls	Mr Carpenter
Mr Ainsworth	Ms Radisich

Question thus negatived.

*Debate (on amendment to motion) Resumed*

**MR HYDE** (Perth) [5.24 pm]: I was offended because I thought my chance to speak on this matter was to be cruelly cut off. I am glad that democracy has ruled in the House. I salute the work that has been done by the minister and members of the industry on this issue. We all need to calm down and look at the situation. We are basically in agreement on most points. Consensus has been reached, except on the issue of the fee. I will come to that later. It is not a case of members turning up to a photo grab to demonstrate that they are in sync with people in the important small business community. Members of the Government have been in contact with small charter vehicle operators. A number of SCV operators live in and work out of my electorate. I commend them and thank them for keeping me up to date with their issues, concerns and views on the way in which the industry should operate.

It has been brought to my attention that some members of the industry are already adjusting wedding transport charges to cope with the introduction of a fee. This has added \$7 to the cost of each wedding booking. I am told that this increase has not led to any cancellations. We are starting to put a fee into perspective. I acknowledge and salute the people who have given up their time and are in the public gallery today to listen to what the Government is trying to do and to find out the views of other members of Parliament. The SCV operators in my electorate and others in the inner city and outer suburb areas have donated their time and services to sporting and other community groups. Like many small business people, they are incredibly important, community-minded members of our society. In my previous role in local government, I was confronted with the suggestion that SCV operators should pay a rate when they parked their vehicles, often stretch limousines, outside their homes at night. I know that the former mayor of Bayswater and the former deputy mayor of Mandurah also faced that issue. Local government people who were in touch with small business and SCV operators fought the imposition of that charge. I do not believe that any of the 144 councils in Western Australia have taken up that charge. That is one of the ways we have fought to lower the impost on small business.

The Government is concerned about ensuring that charges are increased to a fair and just level. No small business operator wants to pay an increase. However, it is important to put any increase in perspective. Members who have a background in local government know that some small business owners operate Mr Whippy vans. A person who runs a Mr Whippy van pays an \$800 licence fee for a site. It is \$1 100 for a site in

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

the Wanneroo and Joondalup areas. The licence gives an operator the right to operate his business. That puts the \$600 fee in context.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Does it give them a site?

Mr HYDE: No. The term "itinerant vendor" means that the operator moves around. The operator is not given a plot of land or a lease. A stallholder's licence is given to someone who operates on one spot.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Are they unlimited? Could 100 people get licences for an area?

Mr HYDE: The member for Bunbury has long experience in local government. When the member for Bunbury and the member for Mitchell drive together down the highway, they can share that information. The operators of Mr Whippy vans are in small business as well.

The Opposition has stated its opposition to the \$600 fee, and suddenly it has a policy-free vacuum. It is great that the Opposition can say what should not be happening, but it must be able to show a bit of leadership and suggest a figure. Should the fee be \$500 or \$20? A member opposite stated that when we look at the situation in Victoria, we are comparing apples with apples. However, that is not the case, because every time an SCV goes over the Bolte Bridge, it is sluggish \$6. Every time an SCV vehicle travels on the new freeway to the airport, it incurs a \$6 e-TAG charge. The impost on SCV operators, taxi operators and many others is huge. In Western Australia, certainly under the Labor Government, there will be no road tolls. A vehicle can travel through the tunnel on the Polly Farmer Freeway without being charged. Maybe the Opposition would like to remove the \$600 fee, and charge vehicles \$6 every time they travel through that tunnel.

Several opposition members interjected.

Mr HYDE: Does the Opposition deny this?

The Opposition states that it is not in favour of the \$600 fee, but it will not suggest where the money should come from. After looking at the figures that have been quoted, even with the \$600 fee there will not be a cost recovery, and this measure will not pay for all the services that are provided to the industry and to road users. The Government looked at the car-bay tax that is paid by many business operators in the central business district. That is a cost-recovery tax, and it pays for people to use the central area transit bus. Hopefully, this tax will deter people from using cars and will provide more employment for SCV operators. It will become more convenient for businesses because of the many people attending conventions and functions that are held at many of the hotels in my electorate. It will become a cheaper and better option to hire an SCV to travel to a function in the CBD. The car-bay tax is a cost-recovery measure that also helps the SCV industry.

Ms Hodson-Thomas interjected.

Mr HYDE: The new structure that is proposed in the regulation meets the needs of the industry. We have been told that, except for the \$600 fee, most people in the industry are happy with the new regulations.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: That is what I am saying. There is a difference between the SCV operators who deliver the type of service that you are talking about and those who actually service the wedding market. They are not on the road and are unable to be subjected to that kind of cost recovery. I hope that the member will raise these concerns with the minister in a constructive way.

Mr HYDE: The member for Carine had a 20-minute opportunity to speak on the amendment. When we come back to the motion, and I speak again, I will be happy to hear the member for Carine speak again.

The Government has provided the true apples with apples comparison by looking at the situation in Adelaide, which does not have the same level of road tolls or the other incumbencies that are placed on the industry. In South Australia, the SCV fee is \$1 200. In comparison with the \$600 that is being proposed in Western Australia, we are comparing apples with apples and have obtained more realistic figures.

We also looked at the meetings that have been held with the industry and the introduction of a two-tiered fare structure. The member for Joondalup dealt with those issues, so I will not go over them again. The fee is indexed against the consumer price index, so hopefully we will move away from the need to restructure the industry. However, we have ended up with a greater increase than should have been the case. If a responsible position had been taken on this matter during the past eight years, the step being taken by the Government would have produced only a small amount of pain.

SCV operators have also highlighted the impact of the GST on many aspects of the industry; it has been a huge impost. The Gallop Government does not want to place a bigger impost upon small business than is necessary. However, it is important that there is a cost recovery. This measure does not meet full cost recovery, but by taking this step, we will be able to gain consensus in the industry and move forward. I applaud the minister,

**Extract from *Hansard***  
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 10 April 2002]  
p9362b-9376a

Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde

---

members in the gallery and the industry for coming to the table to discuss these issues. I hope that the industry continues to thrive and prosper.

Amendment put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (27)

Mr Andrews	Mr Hill	Mr McGowan	Mr Ripper
Mr Bowler	Mr Hyde	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Brown	Mr Kobelke	Mr Marlborough	Mr Templeman
Mr D'Orazio	Mr Kucera	Mrs Martin	Mr Watson
Dr Edwards	Mr Logan	Mr Murray	Mr Whitely
Dr Gallop	Ms MacTiernan	Mr O'Gorman	Ms Quirk ( <i>Teller</i> )
Ms Guise	Mr McGinty	Mr Quigley	

Noes (19)

Mr Barnett	Mr Edwards	Mr Marshall	Mr Sweetman
Mr Birney	Ms Hodson-Thomas	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Dr Constable	Mr House	Mr Omodei	Dr Woollard
Mr Day	Mr Johnson	Mr Pandal	Mr Bradshaw ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mrs Edwardes	Mr McNee	Mr Barron- Sullivan	

---

Pairs

Ms McHale	Mr Waldron
Mr Carpenter	Mr Grylls
Ms Radisich	Mr Ainsworth

Question thus passed.