

## TAXI PLATES

### *Statement*

**HON JIM SCOTT** (South Metropolitan) [5.27 pm]: I want to talk about the impact on taxi plate owners of the implementation of the new taxi laws. The owners of taxi plates who operate during peak periods and special events are very concerned about the application of the legislation. One issue that they were concerned about during debate on the legislation was the percentage of new taxis that would come on stream over time. The minister supposedly capped the number of extra taxi plates at 20 per cent. That is fine for premium taxi plates, which are within that sphere. However, many owners are concerned that the percentage has already been exceeded for taxis that operate during peak periods.

A member interjected.

Hon JIM SCOTT: That is according to the numbers I have been given.

Another issue is that private taxi owners are finding it extremely difficult to lease their taxi plates. They say that they are required to have a larger type of vehicle which incurs more significant service costs. They have also made an investment to buy the licence plates and are finding it very hard to get people to lease their plates in competition with these new leased plates that are currently being released into the taxi market. This has particularly impacted on the drivers of peak period taxis because the percentage of outlay that they have for the return they can expect compared with that of drivers of premium plate taxis is much greater, because the vehicle cost is more than that for the premium plate taxi and they are not using it for as much time.

Hon Ken Travers: The cost is significantly less than the cost of a premium taxi plate. Taxi drivers make their money on Friday and Saturday nights at peak times when there is a shortage of taxis.

Hon JIM SCOTT: The member is partly right. For some of them it is the case. Premium taxi plates are obtained in many ways, and some of them were in fact free at one stage. It is therefore partly the truth but not the whole truth.

Hon Ken Travers: They have all been obtained at a cost well below what people were paying.

Hon JIM SCOTT: The critical issue here is that they have calculated their additional costs over the period of the licences that have been granted. In fact, it costs them \$50 000 more over that leasing period than it does for a driver leasing a government-owned plate, which makes it more difficult for them to lease their taxis out than it does for those with a taxi with a government-owned plate. Nobody wants to lease from them. They are finding it hard to get people to take up their plates.

Hon Ken Travers: Are these drivers or businesspeople?

Hon JIM SCOTT: They are people with a couple of taxis. It was proposed during the debate that the Government look at that small group of taxi drivers to provide a pathway for them to change over to premium plates, either through an additional payment or some other mechanism, but unfortunately that has not occurred. There is now another split class.

Hon Ken Travers: When you have these matters, come and talk to people before you raise them in the House. I am happy to go through these matters with you, but you have your facts wrong.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member is quite entitled to raise them in the House.

Hon JIM SCOTT: According to Hon Ken Travers I have my facts wrong, but these are the facts that have been put to me.

Hon Barry House: He knows everything. You should know that.

Hon Ken Travers: Relative to the brain pool in this place, you are right.

Hon Barry House: There is nothing like being humble, is there?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Jim Scott is trying to make a speech.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Thank you, Mr President. I did raise this issue.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! A member obviously needs to adjourn to regain his composure!

Hon JIM SCOTT: Thank you, Mr President. I raised the issue during the debate on the Bill. The Government was cooperative on a whole lot of matters, but this is one of the issues on which the Government did not take the path I put to it. I am not saying that the Government must take my path every time, even though sometimes the numbers work out that way. The matter needs to be re-examined. Rather than dismissing it out of hand the Government needs to look closely at the cost structures to see whether they are making it difficult for people

who lease out their taxi plates. They are telling me that they are having difficulties. I understand that they incur penalties if they do not operate their taxis during peak times. It is very difficult for them if they cannot get someone to take up the lease. I ask the Government to look at this and not to dismiss it out of hand. I ask the Government also to look at the rate at which not premium taxi plates but peak period taxi plates are being released and to discuss these matters with operators who purchased plates prior to the previous legislation. Some resolution might be able to be found that enables them to keep their taxis operating. If they are not operating during peak periods, the public will miss out and start complaining when there are no taxis to pick up people. I ask that the minister be made aware of those concerns and that the minister follow them up.