

## BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



## MEDIA RELEASE

7 March 2019

### Taxi owners submit action against Qld Govt

KAP Leader and Federal Member for Kennedy Bob Katter joined more than 60 taxi owners representing more than 900 individuals who hold licences (half of Queensland's taxi industry) as they submitted a closed action Claim and Statement of Claim in the Supreme Court against the Queensland State Government.

The 956 plaintiffs' Claim and Statement of Claim, for what could be more than a billion-dollar action, was filed in the Brisbane Supreme Court to seek compensation from the Queensland Government for legalising ridesharing and completely eroding the value of taxi licences.

Mr Katter said the group was very powerful in going forward in its fight for justice, which would request compensation for allowing ridesharing to enter the country.

He estimated the capitalised losses to total \$1,500 billion, which he said had been thieved by the State Government and handed to a foreign corporation.

"I've had numerous cases in my office where the Government prosecuted Australians for car hire without a taxi licence; they rigidly enforced the law against Australians, but when a big foreign corporation (ridesharing) came in, they didn't enforce the law at all," he said.

"There is one set of laws for Australians and another set of laws - a free ride and a red carpet - for a foreign corporation."

Mr Katter said the Crown had destroyed the property rights of the taxi owners and reduced their jobs to casualised labour, costing them their savings and superannuation.

He highlighted the irresponsibility of the State Government in exposing the taxpayer to the huge capitalised losses through its "stupidity".

"The other states did it, but did it in cunning, sneaky manner... these people (Qld Government) have been so stupid that we can get at them," he said.

Instructing Solicitor John Maitland, who Mr Katter described as one of the finest lawyers in Australia, said a group of very experienced and clever barristers was gathered to examine the case.

"Morally, the Queensland Government was very wrong," he said.

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“We had to make sure that somewhere we had a head of law that would stick with the court so that what was morally wrong could also be found to be legally wrong.”

Mr Maitland said a Claim and Statement of Claim were filed and served on Crown law on behalf of 956 individuals or entities which hold about 1,350 licences.

“The thrust of the claim is for compensation as a result of the conduct of the State of Queensland in allowing ridesharing to come in, in the face of earlier promises and representations which these ‘mum and dad’ investors over the years have borrowed against and relied to fund their businesses and their own retirements,” Mr Maitland said.

He added some licences were worth more than \$500,000 and had plummeted to \$50,000 to \$60,000.

“It’s not hard to see that if somebody has bought a licence and mortgaged their house to pay for it, that when the licence is suddenly devalued, there’s a shortfall, and the banks have not been kind to these people.”

He shared heartbreaking stories of suicide and people being thrown out of their homes as a result of the financial problems.

“When ridesharing came in, it was not a level playing field,” he said.

“I’m instructed to do the best for my ‘mum and dad’ investors here. We’re here because there’s no other option at this stage.”

Spokesperson representing the taxi owners Marie Meares from Cairns urged the Government to look at the mums and dads it had destroyed.

Every taxi supported 3.5 families full-time, she said, but now, they no longer supported the owner and would support approximately only one family in total.

She outlined the prohibitive costs and regulations taxis faced including camera upgrades and disability services that made them unable to compete with the ridesharing industry.

“These people are just dropping out; they’re putting their licence in the drawer because they’ve got nowhere to go with it,” she said.

“If this industry keeps going the way it is, we’ll be deregulated and the only losers will be the public.”

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Ms Meares urged the Government to approach the matter from a compassionate perspective and consult more with industry.

“Maybe they should have got out of their glass offices and come and spoken to us... they didn’t look at the ramifications.”

She used the analogy of setting up a tent to sell cheap beer from across the road from a licenced pub.

“Everybody needs to take a look and get behind the people that support you,” she said.

She added a final reminder.

“And if you ever need a guide dog, you won’t be getting into an Uber with it.”

Mr Katter said a mob of Australians was finally standing up and fighting.

“My fellow farmers, they got deregulated and destroyed, big supermarket corporations got rich by literally over our dead bodies. We never stood up and fought,” he said.

“This mob, at long last, a group of Australians, are saying ‘we’re copping it no more, you’re not taking property off Australians and handing it over to a foreign corporation – we’re going to stand up and fight’. So more power to the taxi industry of Queensland.”

—ENDS—