



Letter to the Editor – Newcastle Herald
12 December 2014

UBER'S CLAIMS AGAINST TAXI INDUSTRY ARE DISINGENUOUS

I refer to your article published 9 December titled "Uber car sharing app set to start in Newcastle" written by journalist Michael McGowan as well as Ian Kirkwood's editorial of the same day.

As advised to Michael McGowan, it is disingenuous for Uber to accuse the NSW Taxi Industry of intimidation and threats.

The NSW Taxi Council has simply been asking for the NSW Government to uphold the law and apply it equally to all. If Uber believes that this constitutes threats and intimidation then there is a much wider issue at hand in relation to this.

Uber is facing widespread condemnation for its blatant disregard for the law by providing its ridesharing services Uber X. Across the globe in Europe, Asia, the United States and here in Australia, law makers and regulators are taking action to reign in Uber's complete disregard for the laws of democratically elected governments. The arrogance on display from Uber in ignoring these requirements is breathtaking.

As I recently wrote in the Newcastle Herald, laws are made to protect the public interest which centres on public safety and service reliability. Not liking the law because it does not suit an organisation's business model and profit motive is not a reason to break it.

The growing number of incidents of criminal behaviour occurring in unregulated ridesharing vehicles around the world is cause for alarm and is a tragic but salient reminder to Governments that they have a moral obligation to protect the public interest and uphold the law.

As I also wrote, this is also about customer service. The editorial's reference to the professional commitment of the taxi driver named "Carlos" exemplifies the commitment of the NSW Taxi Industry to customer service. The added bonus of this service is that the earnings generated by drivers such as Carlos stay in NSW and the Hunter Region. This has been independently assessed and proven. The 20% which Uber takes out of each fare goes to the profits of an international company that are declared overseas.

The bottom line is that Newcastle Taxis provide essential public transport services that comply with the law and are delivered in the interest of the Newcastle region. Uber's accusations of intimidatory behaviour are a 'smoke screen' to mask the real issue of the serious risk that its ridesharing services present to the public.

Roy Wakelin-King, AM
Chief Executive Officer
NSW Taxi Council