



Letter to the Editor
30 January 2015

Dear Editor – Tweed Daily News

I refer to the article by Alina Rylko published 28 January titled “Drivers make a motza as Uber app hits home”.

Ms Rylko writes that “Uber has boomed in popularity around the world...” however it’s important to note that Uber’s illegal rideshare service Uber X operates on a purely profit-based by ignoring local transportation laws set in the public interest.

On the other hand, regulated taxi services go to great lengths and costs to comply with transportation laws in providing a safe, sustainable universal service which doesn’t discriminate.

This includes extensive driver training and regular screening, wheelchair accessible taxis, vehicle inspections, on-board cameras, built in GPS, proper public liability insurance policies and duress alarms, none of which the Uber X model considers important enough to implement.

Current regulated taxi companies all have the technology available and provide smart phone booking apps as well as a host of other customer service measures, so it’s not a case of the law needing to catch up, it’s a case of Uber needing to comply with the law and not jeopardise public safety.

Ms Rylko’s comments that her Uber X driver’s rating of 4.9 out of 5 “almost certainly guaranteed the driver was not an axe murderer” may be made (at least partly) in jest, but the reality is that Uber X does not require its drivers to undertake ongoing criminal history checks.

Ms Rylko also states that “if you’ve been to London, New Delhi or New York lately, you would have used Uber” but the serious reality is that Uber is currently banned in New Delhi because a convicted criminal Uber X driver was allowed by Uber to work for the organisation and subsequently raped a passenger as a result.

The NSW Taxi Council and a growing number in the general community are becoming more aware that, despite often offering cheaper prices, Uber’s deregulated rideshare model represents a negative impact on drivers and customers. The fact that State Governments around Australia are taking steps to halt the operation of Uber X demonstrates that regulators recognise these risks and that they must act in the public interest.

Across the globe in Europe, Asia, the United States and here in Australia, law makers are taking action in the form of court orders, vehicle confiscations and fines 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.

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 valid reason to break it.

Sincerely,

Roy Wakelin-King AM
CEO, NSW Taxi Council