

BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



MEDIA RELEASE

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Qld taxi owners gather in Brisbane to grow legal action against Qld Govt

KAP Federal Leader and Member for Kennedy Bob Katter and State Member for Traeger Robbie Katter joined legal counsel and taxi owners in Brisbane this morning as part of a roadshow inviting taxi licence owners to join a legal claim against the Queensland State Government.

Action by the Queensland Government has seen the value of Qld taxi licences almost completely eroded and 25 per cent of revenue from ridesharing given to a foreign multinational rather than the Qld economy.

Following on from similar meetings in Melbourne last week, the roadshow began in Cairns yesterday with tremendous success.

There are currently 700 plaintiffs, with numbers quickly growing, who have suffered a combined loss of an estimated billion dollars.

Cairns licence-holder and spokesperson for the taxi owners Marie Meares said the Cairns meeting, headed by barrister John Ribbands and instructing solicitor John Maitland, went seamlessly.

“The meeting was brilliantly received,” she said.

“About 150 taxi licence owners turned up, plus 90 watched the coverage streamed online, and everyone went away satisfied with everything that was presented to them... everything was explained beautifully.”

She said people travelled from Townsville, the Burdekin and Ingham to attend and some new members came on board.

Ahead of the meeting in Brisbane this morning, taxi licence owner and operator of First Class Taxis on the Gold Coast Shane Smith detailed the extent of the damage that ridesharing had caused.

“Lots of people have invested huge amounts of money; had mortgages and loans and self-managed super funds and had to operate in a fully-regulated market under legislation that simply lets a competitor into the market without any compensation – it’s unconscionable conduct,” he said.

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“Allowing a competitor in has dramatically decreased the value of those licences and created huge financial hardships.”

He said it had completely changed the taxi owners’ property right, but the impacts were much deeper than just financial.

“A lot of people, especially elderly people with self-managed super funds, have gone through huge financial, emotional and psychological stress; some have even had strokes, heart attacks and even committed suicide,” he said.

Shane Smith said the legal action was to seek compensation for the loss of capital value of the licences by the Queensland Government moving to a fully deregulated “pre-booked” market.

“That means the Government is saying it hasn’t actually cancelled our licences and didn’t take our property; taxis can do rank and hail but Ubers can’t,” he explained.

One of the most devastating aspects of the ridesharing industry was the hit to hardworking taxi owners in favour of a foreign company with questionable conduct, Shane Smith said.

“The fact that the Labor (Queensland) Government is happy for a totally foreign-owned company that engaged in tax minimisation and profit-shifting, over long-term, loyal, hardworking Queenslanders,” he said.

Bob and Robbie Katter have been strongly encouraging taxi licence owners across Qld to stand up and fight.

“The passionate commitment by the KAP to this cause is ultimately due to that on present trends, taxis will be a thing of the past,” Bob Katter said.

“15,000 to 20,000 full-time drivers will be thrown into casualised labour with no real liveable income.

“To quote Graham Richardson on his Sky News show, \$6,000 million has been thieved off hard-working Australians and handed over to a foreign corporation.”

Robbie Katter echoed the sentiment that ridesharing annihilated any chance of fair competition and supported a major multinational company at the expense of local business.

“If the Government went out tomorrow and deregulated the hotel industry so you could sell booze out of your house, you’d have people up in arms and a lot of angry publicans – same situation goes for chemists and newsagents,” he said.

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“And that’s what you’ve got here – a lot of angry business owners.

“The Government let the value of their asset be repatriated to a multinational that pays no tax in Australia.”

Bob Katter, legal counsel Barrister John Ribbands, instructing solicitor John Maitland, Ian Coleman SC and Gerry Nash QC are driving a closed proceeding, seeking compensation from the Queensland Government arising from the introduction of ridesharing in the state, which has adversely affected the taxi industry.

Mr Katter praised the work to date by the legal counsel involved in this case.

“The case is pretty simple – taxi owners had a property right, the right to operate a taxi,” he said.

“Government action destroyed the value of that property right and the Crown is liable.”

A statement of claim has been completed and will be filed in the Queensland Supreme Court by early 2019.

The claim has been years in the making, with the establishment of a steering group from across Queensland earlier this year.

The group travelled to Melbourne to meet with legal counsel in May this year and again last week.

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