



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice



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28 APR 2014

Mr Benjamin Wash CPA
Chief Executive Officer
Taxi Council Queensland
PO Box 290
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Dear Mr Wash

Thank you for your letter dated 4 February 2014 regarding mandatory sentencing for assaults on taxi drivers. I apologise for the delay in responding.

You ask that the Criminal Code be amended to include "taxi drivers as part of the category of workers for which there is a minimum mandatory sentence enforced for assault on their person."

Currently, the only 'assault' provision in the Criminal Code which includes a mandatory minimum sentence is the offence of serious assault upon a police officer by a participant in a criminal organisation and where the assault: caused bodily harm; or involved biting, spitting or the application of any bodily fluid or faeces; or if the offender was, or pretended to be, armed with a dangerous weapon.

This Government acknowledges that Queensland's taxi industry provides a valuable and important service to our community and I can assure you that Queensland's Criminal Code includes a range of offences to protect taxi drivers and others in the community from assaults and other acts of violence.

The offence of common assault carries a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment. An assault that causes bodily harm (for example, bruising which causes discomfort) carries a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment, increasing to 10 years imprisonment if the offender was armed or in the company of another/others at the time of the assault. An assault that causes grievous bodily harm carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment, increasing to life imprisonment if intentionally caused. The offence of robbery is punishable by a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment, increasing to life imprisonment if the offender is armed or in company with another/other at the relevant time.

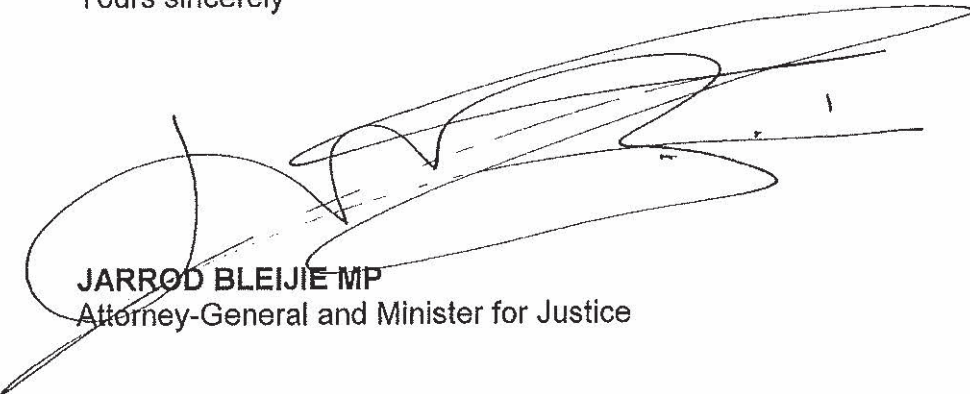
The Queensland Government is committed to making our communities safer and we have acted swiftly to deliver a comprehensive suite of law and order policy commitments. On 23 March 2014, the Premier announced the release of a draft 'Safe Night Out Strategy' (the Strategy) to stamp out alcohol and drug related violence, restore responsible behaviour and ensure you can enjoy a safe night out.

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Thank you for taking the time to write to the Government with your suggestions for reform in this area.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the printed name.

JARROD BLEIJIE MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice



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The Hon. Jarrod Bleijie
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4 February 2014

Dear Mr Bleijie *Jarrod*

RE: MANDATORY SENTENCING FOR ASSAULTS ON DRIVERS

I am writing on behalf of Taxi Council Queensland ("TCQ") to raise the issue of assaults against taxi drivers.

As you are aware, taxi drivers perform a front line service role in transporting the public and this can at times expose them to individuals who may be disposed to violence. Unlike other front line service providers such as police, fire or health workers, drivers are neither trained nor equipped to deal with violent behaviour and indeed are often more vulnerable as they are confined to a motor vehicle. I'm sure that you would agree that it is not only unreasonable but unacceptable that someone performing a public service should ever have to find themselves being either threatened or the victim of violence.

In recent times there has been significant public discussion regarding violence, especially as it relates to drug and alcohol consumption. It is concerning for many drivers to see reports of "one-punch" deaths and can lead to trepidation in late night pickups whether in entertainment precincts or the suburbs. As an industry we are all too aware of the widespread issue of violence and can assure you that it is not limited to only entertainment precincts. In fact, thanks to initiatives such as the Secure Ranks programme it is often safer for drivers to pick up in such precincts.

The concern is that assaults carried out against drivers are not treated any differently to those that occur in "normal" circumstances. Our view is that the nature of the service that drivers provide, that is a 24/7, on demand, door-to-door service, is more aligned to the sort of service provided by other front line works such as police, fire and health workers. To that end, TCQ considers that it would be appropriate for the Government to review the Criminal Code and consider including taxi drivers as part of the category of workers for which there is a minimum mandatory sentence enforced for assault on their person. This would send a clear message to potential offenders that violence toward taxi drivers is not acceptable and will attract harsh penalties.

Such an amendment will not only provide peace of mind for drivers but also help to alleviate some of the fears that those considering a career as a professional taxi driver may have. TCQ supports the strong stance that the Newman Government has taken with regard to those who wish to stand apart from socially acceptable behaviour and is confident that the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code are fully aligned with the actions the Government has taken to date. This, combined with the implementation of audio recordings in taxis will further serve to protect the hardworking men and women serving the community in this very important role.

I look forward to your response and the opportunity to further discuss this matter with you in person.

Should you require any further information or clarification in regard to the issues raised in this letter please do not hesitate to contact me on (07) 3434 2100.

Yours faithfully

Benjamin Wash CPA
Chief Executive Officer
Taxi Council Queensland