

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP)

Melbourne—Tuesday, 19 October 2021

MEMBERS

Mr Enver Erdogan—Chair

Mr Bernie Finn—Deputy Chair

Mr Rodney Barton

Mr Mark Gepp

Mrs Bev McArthur

Mr Tim Quilty

Mr Lee Tarlamis

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Mr Andy Meddick

Mr Edward O'Donohue

Mr Craig Ondarchie

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Ms Harriet Shing

Ms Kaushaliya Vaghela

Ms Sheena Watt

WITNESS (*via videoconference*)

Mr Colin Wells, Director, Victorian Taxi Association.

The CHAIR: The Economy and Infrastructure Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program continues. Please ensure that mobile phones are switched to silent and any background noise is minimised.

I wish to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners and paying my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I wish to welcome any members of the public that are watching via the live broadcast.

My name is Enver Erdogan, and I am Chair of the committee. I would like to introduce my fellow committee members: our Deputy Chair, Mr Bernie Finn; Mr Andy Meddick; Mr Lee Tarlamis; and Mr Rod Barton.

To witnesses giving evidence, all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege under the *Constitution Act* and under the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore any information you provide during the hearing is protected by law; however, any information repeated outside may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a transcript following today's hearing. Ultimately transcripts will be made public and put on our website for public broadcast.

We welcome any opening comments but ask that they be kept to a maximum of 10 minutes to allow plenty of discussion with the committee. Could you please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then start your presentation. Over to you, Colin.

Mr WELLS: Colin Wells is my name. I am here representing the Victorian Taxi Association, an association of non-metropolitan taxi BSPs. Whilst we do not have huge numbers, we have a huge geographical coverage. Most of the examples I will give today will be Bendigo based, because that is where I am from.

Reading through everything, I just was not sure what the achievement hope was for this committee meeting. I could not see what the end goal was or if it was just for information gathering, so I thought I would take the opportunity to start by saying what I thought we should be looking at.

The CHAIR: Look, Colin, I appreciate that. Just to clarify: so what are we hoping to do? We are hoping to give an assessment of the impact of these reforms back to the government. We are going to give them feedback, so if you would like to share your experience, we would love to hear it.

Mr WELLS: Thank you. I think we should be looking to protect the special group of passengers that are covered by the MPTP. There will be a lot of talk about the wheelchair taxi fleet and the cross-subsidisation of that, but it also needs to be acknowledged that the MPTP covers sedan customers as well. The committee needs to be aware that these sedan customers are also high needs. They are slow to get in and out of the vehicles, extra care is needed loading walkers, extra care is needed with groceries—all that sort of thing. They are not the high-volume customer that a traditional sedan would transport.

You also need to be aware that these are special community members, right? I do not know whether any of the committee have ever had a conversation with a special needs passenger's parent around whether she should kill her child if she gets a terminal disease because she is that scared about what is going to happen to her child when she is no longer with us. I have had that conversation. I do not know whether any of you have had the conversation with the parents of a special needs person who is now 35 and would have been in an institution from the age of five. I have had that conversation. That is the service that we are offering; that is the service that we are putting at risk if we do not get these changes right. These are real people with real lives, and they are a huge asset to our community that has traditionally been kept shut away. If you think it has been hard going through COVID lockdown over the last 18 months, what about these poor buggers? That is going to be their permanent life if we lose the services—I should say when we lose the services—that transport them around. I am really sorry if I get passionate about this, but it cannot be overstated just how important it is—when we sit in the armchairs and make these business decisions, the impact it has on the lives of people.

We have been told for the last six years by the CPVV that we need to treat our business as a business. Well, it is easy for me; I can. I come from banking. You do not pay me, I sell your house. I have got no heart. So I can shut down these services, right? That is not a problem for me. But we have got people that are running services that have been doing it for 20 years.

A few examples. I turned up at work, first day, and I noticed that my mate's special needs sister, who has been using a taxi to get to and from her day programs since I was 15, is still being transported by us. That is 46 years with that one person. These are long-term things that have happened. As I said, it makes a massive difference to their lives, so please be very careful about the way you look at it. Because those long-term relationships are there, a lot of the current operators have a personal obligation and emotional blackmail—if you want to use those sorts of words—to continue a non-business service. I am telling you now the replacements that come into these businesses are going to have no compunctions at all about shutting them down. I just am struggling to understand why one new player has been given special privileges at the cost to everyone else—much like Greater Western Sydney. Some football team were given special concessions. It would appear that the new players in the market are given those concessions.

I am just a simple country boy so I struggle to understand these big macro-economic things, but why in the hell would the government, when it is looking to fund the purchase of the licences, drop the registration price? So we dropped the registration from \$2500 back to about \$750 now; we have got 90 000 cars registered, so we are collecting \$67 million instead of \$225 million. Why was that made? There is only one reason it can be made—it is because it did not suit the new player. And it is still happening. We have got the insanity now that the drivers—all CPV drivers—have to be vaccinated. That is a reasonable request. How is it being policed? Oh, it is purely voluntary. It is up to the operator, it is up to the driver, to say, 'Yeah, I have been'. They are not putting any responsibility onto the BSP to check that. Again, why is that being done? Because I do not think it would suit the new players to the market. So we are putting everyone's health at risk because we want to make it easier for these new players. Guys, the new players have been in the market for three years. If they are not coping now, they need to get out. They were not the white knight that everyone thought they were going to be. It is probably best I stop and I answer some questions, because I can go on for quite a while.

The CHAIR: No, Colin. I really enjoyed your passion and lived experience. That is why these public hearings are important, because we need to hear from people who are on the front line, like you said. I am not working in that sector; you are, so you are sharing with us your lived experience, and it is very heartening to hear how much you care about your clients. They are more than just clients to you, and it is, I think, important that decision-makers understand that. So thank you for sharing that. What I might do is give committee members an opportunity to ask some questions. I might go to Mr Barton and then Mr Finn in that order, or Mr Finn, would you like to go first as deputy?

Mr FINN: Look, Mr Chairman, I will, thank you. Colin, could I ask you to do one thing for me, and that is never, ever, ever lose that passion because we need more people like you, and thank God that you are there. Look, I am aware of many of the things that you have raised from speaking to parents of children—well, they are not children anymore, they are adults—and some people being too afraid to die because they do not know what is going to happen to their offspring. It is a pretty horrendous thing, so I fully understand where you are coming from on that. What do we need to do to maintain this program? You do not have to convince me this program is important. I know it is important and I know it is absolutely vital for many people and many families. What do we have to do as a committee; what do we have to recommend to ensure that this program continues and indeed goes from strength to strength?

Mr WELLS: It is probably not a bad idea to start with some basic requirements for anyone who is going to be transporting these passengers. I think it is insane that there is not a police check needed when we are transporting vulnerable people. There is also a vulnerable persons check that should be thrown in. When we as an organisation have raised this with the regulator—and I call them the regulator; they are not the safety regulator, they are the bloody regulator, they do not just take one piece of it, they get it all—the reason we are told that it is not part of the requirement is, 'Oh, it would put the cost of getting a driver certification up, and then we wouldn't get the drivers'. Again, I believe that is a concession for the new player, because everything is being skewed to the part-time operator to the detriment of the full-time operator.

The other thing that I think the committee needs to be recommending is we want the best of drivers to do this work, because it is the best of drivers that have the passion for it. You just cannot do this work if you do not

give a stuff, and so when we talk about, 'Oh, well, we should have a minimum payment', I mean, these guys should nearly get a bonus for doing it.

Mr FINN: Absolutely.

Mr WELLS: From personal experience, I have had an 84-year-old in the back of the van, and it just happened to be a Sunday and it just happened to be the day that the aged-care facility said, 'Oh, yes, he'll be right to travel on his own', but this poor bloke has had a stroke. He cannot speak, he cannot point and I have gone a different way than he normally goes to get to his children's place for the party, and he is in tears, weeping in the back, because he thinks he is being abducted. Now, I have got to drive him, stay safe on the road and give him reassurance all at the same time. This is quite a unique skill set, and it is not a skill set that just happens. You have got to want it to happen, and that is what we need to be encouraging. I have been fighting the education system for the last three years and I will keep fighting until I get a chink in the armour, because I want to get schoolkids in our vans for work experience, not because I want them to be bloody taxidriviers but I want them to experience aged care. I want them to experience physiotherapy needs. I want them to do speech pathology. Any of the caring careers they get a taste of for 10 minutes at a time in the van. And even in the sedans it still happens.

Many of our community members only speak to two or three people each week. That is their taxidriver and that is their check-out person at the supermarket. That is the only human contact they have. They are traditionally the lowest paid of all the workforce. We need to turn that around a little bit. Funding is always an issue, but it is something where the government needs to just say, 'You know what? We have an obligation to care for these people. We can't expect the service providers to put the subsidy in'. I will happily agree with this committee that we will charge less for MPTP members the day that Coles say, 'We'll only charge 50 cents for someone on social security because they've got less money', because that is effectively what you are asking the industry to do when you are saying, 'Can you do it cheaper, can you do it cheaper?'. You want a higher level of service for less money. The two things do not add up.

Mr FINN: Yes, I agree. Just very briefly, Mr Chairman, and I apologise for hogging, but I would really love to know: has there been any discussion with the NDIS as to how the Multi Purpose Taxi Program can actually be taken up as a part of that?

Mr WELLS: My understanding is that once the NDIS comes in, the NDIS recipient loses their MPTP card. So that means when they run out of money—

Mr FINN: So where does that leave the client?

Mr WELLS: That leaves the client on the footpath, because with a wheelchair person, if they have got an MPTP card, there is a lifting fee to acknowledge the fact that there is extra time taken putting the chair in and out of the van and strapping it down. For the driver that is about \$15. For the NDIS client, they are not allowed to use their MPTP card, so the driver does not get that. Now, put yourself in the driver's shoes. Who are you going to go and collect? You are paid on the money that you get on your meter. Why would you collect someone that is going to be less value than someone else? And that is the reality. So there just needs to be a flat fee for these vehicles, and it does not matter whether it is the NDIS paying it, whether the MPTP pay it or whether the person who has got so much money that they cannot be bothered getting the card—and they are out there—pays it themselves. Mother's Day, Christmas Day, you will get transport in wheelchair taxis—these clients are never seen any other time of the year. So the whole structure of it needs to be different.

Mr FINN: Okay, Colin, thank you for that. Mr Chairman, could I just indicate that I would really like to revisit this area with the NDIS, because I think this is something that we could really make a big difference on.

The CHAIR: Yes. We were planning to have the NDIS today as a witness, and that did not work out, but we will be reaching out to them. I might pass over to Mr Barton, then Mr Meddick. Mr Barton.

Mr BARTON: I could not agree with Mr Finn more. Yes, I know Wellsy. I have known Mr Wells for a number of years, and his passion is contagious. I recently did a roadshow through western Victoria, and Mr Wells threw me and Norm into two separate wheelchair vehicles. I have been out in those vehicles, but it has been many years since I have gone back in there. I can honestly say to come back was a very emotional experience—the challenges that these people have in their daily lives. But I am conscious of the time, so Colin,

I just want to talk about your experience in a couple of areas. One is the importance of keeping these wheelchair vehicles on the road. I know that you have now got situations where people are working, taxidrivers in Bendigo are working, and they are not making any money during the day, and your company is setting a minimum fare of \$100 if they go out. Is that correct?

Mr WELLS: Yes.

Mr BARTON: And so the company is subsidising the services.

Mr WELLS: Yes. We cannot afford for drivers to go out there and come in and not have any money.

Mr BARTON: Well, how can they do that? They will have to leave otherwise.

Mr WELLS: Yes.

Mr BARTON: Yes. So you are making that effort, you are putting your hand in your own pocket to make sure that these drivers have a very minimum, basic survival. Right? Now, one of your vehicles, I understand, was involved in an accident not related to your driver at all. It was a wheelchair-accessible vehicle and that vehicle has now been written off. Can you explain the story and the challenges about replacing that vehicle and the commitment that you will have to make of that \$100 000?

Mr WELLS: Yes. Look, it is an easy answer: I have not replaced it. I am paid to make sure the business makes a profit, but my board will accept not making a loss, all right? Basically the bit of money we got from insurance has been what is topping it up to keep the drivers floating around, but how can I possibly invest \$100 000 in a vehicle that has not made any money at all in the last 18 months and prior to that at best broke even? I would rather keep the money in the bank account until we know what is going to happen, because the expansion of the programs is diluting everything.

The program is being expanded, touting 'choice'. I think the committee really needs to be aware that the choice is not always there. Fine, between 9 and 5 o'clock there are lots of choices for sedan users, but because everyone is fighting for the same slice of the pie during the busy time there are actually times of the day now where there is not a CPV on the road in Bendigo—and Bendigo is not a small place. So the people at 3 o'clock in the morning trying to get home on Wednesday or to get to work—whatever the case may be—suddenly have got no choices. So, you know, we are giving different people a choice, but their choice is coming at the expense of someone else's choice, because they cannot use it. I mean, these new choices for the latest expansion only work for someone who has a smartphone and the ability to use it and a credit card and the ability to use it.

Mr BARTON: Colin, can I just jump in there? Mate, when people are making the bookings for the Multi Purpose Taxi Program, what percentage of the work would come through the telephone and what percentage would come through via the app?

Mr WELLS: Ninety-nine point nine per cent would be telephone.

Mr BARTON: Okay. That is how the community wants to use it?

Mr WELLS: That is the nature of the MPTP recipient. The MPTP recipient has to have some sort of disability to qualify for it, and it is also income tested, which is advertised nowhere. So it is the lowest socio-economic group, and it is also those with a disability; it is that matrix that meet the MPTP requirements.

Mr BARTON: Yes. I know it is difficult because we are in COVID, but what percentage of your work would be the Multi Taxi Purpose Program, and what was the impact of rideshare coming in?

Mr WELLS: I will start with the first part. It is probably about 60 per cent, and it just depends on the time of day. So, you know, Saturday night, Friday night—that is not a large portion of the MPTP. But overall it is probably 50 or 60 per cent of our sedan work. It would be 99 per cent of our wheelchair work. And rideshare—well, we had issues before rideshare was even legalised. We had issues with the Facebook groups—the 'Lifts for Cash' on Facebook. We are a population of 100 000; well, there were 10 000 on that Facebook page. So, you know, that has had a significant impact to the night services. Our day services have not really suffered because of it, but it is the after hours where it has happened.

Look, I think it is only matter of time before someone gets up in court and gives the reason that they were drink driving—because they knew they would not be able to get a commercial passenger vehicle to take them home.

Mr BARTON: Are you aware of, because I am, in the smaller towns, where at best the taxi service is barely surviving and where they have had a wheelchair vehicle—can you see anybody in rural and regional Victoria investing in wheelchairs moving forward at this stage under the current scheme?

Mr WELLS: I will qualify my answer: I cannot see anyone making a business decision to invest in a wheelchair taxi.

Mr BARTON: And I take it, Wellsy, that people who work with the disability sector are different—that they have a better heart and that it is part of the work they do. They are special.

Mr WELLS: Yes. It really is. There is no business case whatsoever to be in this space, and there never has been. If you go back through the history, the reason these services were introduced is when the MPTP was first rolled out the government of the day said to the industry, which was the taxi industry at the time, ‘If you want a piece of this pie, you’ve got to start providing wheelchair services’. So it has never been a viable service.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that, Colin. I might have just one short question then hand over to Andy Meddick. Just to confirm: is it fair to say that the drivers in this subsection of the sector are more likely to be full-time professional drivers and are usually at a higher training and experience level? Because the people that I know in this sector usually are. They are people that have been doing this for 10, 20, 30 years, and they are usually more trained for it. Is that fair to say with what you described as the part-timers that are coming in and out of the sector?

Mr WELLS: Yes, absolutely. There are still plenty of professional full-time drivers in the sedan fleet, but the wheelchair fleet—they have a huge love of their passenger. They get to know them exceptionally well. They have usually a longer history with them than many of the carers that these passengers have, so yes. We have had one instance, and we have had to change the way we did it. The very short version of a long story is we had one client, Trent; he had the same driver all the time. Unfortunately people in chairs tend to suffer a lot more health issues. When young Trent passed away our driver went to the funeral. Trent’s dad went up—and they knew the love that these two people had for each other—and his dad said to Big Gav, ‘Would you do us the honour of taking Trent for one last trip?’. So they put the casket in the back of the van and took him to the cemetery. I cannot emphasise enough what the connection with the driver is, and I am never going to stop.

The CHAIR: No, no. I understand, Colin. I am going to pass over to Mr Meddick, because Mr Meddick has been very vocal about the human impact potential of these reforms. So I might pass to Mr Meddick—it is probably a good segue. Mr Meddick.

Mr MEDDICK: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Colin. First of all, thank you for your years of dedication in this space. I know how long you have been at this. It has been a long, long time, and it is reflected in your passion and what you are talking about. Indeed, as I said to two earlier witnesses, my mother-in-law and father-in-law were in this space, in the taxi industry, in Geelong for many, many years, and this is exactly what they had: relationships between them and the people that they picked up—two extremely caring people looking after some of our most vulnerable people in our society. And that kind of leads me to what might sound like a strange analogy to some, but I think it is one that crosses the political divide: you see, there is an old socialist saying that says, ‘Money is put where mouths are in the name of solidarity’, and that is what this is. This is a service that is provided to the most vulnerable in our community, and there is a responsibility that behoves all of us to provide that service regardless of the cost, because it is about the quality of life of the people who are receiving that service. I stand on that, and I would never move away from that. Bearing in mind what you are talking about with the costs associated with this—

Mr FINN: Mr Meddick, could I just say I have never heard that expression, but I agree with you.

Mr MEDDICK: Thank you very much, Mr Finn—cheers.

Mr BARTON: Thank you, Comrade Finn!

Mr MEDDICK: But I broached this with our two previous witnesses, Colin, and it was to talk about: well, if we are going to have an equal market here—this is what we are proposing—then we perhaps need to look into having a mandatory code of practice. It would cover things like a standardisation of a vehicle build, so we are talking about vehicles that are fit for purpose. It includes things like security requirements, cameras et cetera, that are already incumbent upon the taxi industry—that moves into that space—but also a standardisation of training, minimum standards to be met and accreditation as a result. That is just a launching pad, if you like, to having a regular driver picking up that person regularly. Those are all things that I think should be looked at, including perhaps level 2 first aid, the police checks that you mentioned et cetera. Is that something that you would agree with? I mean, I am not proposing that I have got all the solutions here for what that space should look like, but (a) first of all, is it something we should seriously consider, a mandatory code of practice; and (b) would you be supportive of it if it was industry-led, for instance—if the reform in that and what was in it was done by the industry?

Mr WELLS: I would definitely support a minimum code of practice. I would question whether the regulator would be the person to drive that. In fact I would question whether the regulator should be the one driving the MPTP. I think there is too big a conflict of interest, and I think too many times the regulator has already proven that this is not their area of expertise. The knowledge test is a great example of where the regulator really ballsed it up. The regulator brought in the minimum standard and the minimum standard of training was this, and so they put it out to tender and someone else came up with a yes/no, multiple-guess questions. When you failed that test, you were not told which questions you got wrong, and the reason you were not told which questions you got wrong was that you would just go away and learn them. When this was raised with the regulator at the time, the regulator said, ‘Oh, no, that’s not us. We’ve gotten rid of our obligation there. We’ve given that to someone else’. So I would be very reluctant to go down that path.

If it is industry-led, not a problem. You also need to understand that in many of the smaller places doing some of this certification becomes impractical because it is a two- or three-day trip out of town. Once you are starting to get into first aid, you are starting to give the impression that the driver is becoming more than a driver. The driver is the driver; a driver is not a carer. I was going to say the stupidity of the situation, but that is not the best word. The situation is for many of the care homes, if they transport someone, there have got to be two people: there has got to be a vehicle driver and there has got to be a carer. So we cannot bundle those two things into the taxidriver. His/her primary function is to drive the vehicle in a safe manner and to make sure the passenger is in the vehicle in a safe manner. So we are starting to get into areas where you go, ‘Well, hang on, you’re going to push more away than actually get in’.

Mr MEDDICK: Okay. Great. Thanks for that feedback. I appreciate that. Ta.

Mr WELLS: And just a quick point on the funding and the bond that is built between the passenger and the driver, there is also a bond between the BSP and the various institutions in the town, because now with code red days all these institutions have to have an evacuation plan. Now, unless they are going to have three or four cars parked in their carport all year, never used, they will rely on our service and our undertaking that we will prioritise, should an emergency happen, getting their participants safely out of those buildings. So once our services start dwindling, we cannot do that, and the government is just going to spend the money putting the vehicles in a carport. And our situation in Bendigo is absolutely no different to any other regional country town.

Mr MEDDICK: Thank you so much, Colin. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I might pass over to Mr Barton, then Mr Finn, if they have additional questions. Mr Barton, I know you have been patiently waiting.

Mr BARTON: Colin, what do we need to do to fix this now?

Mr WELLS: The first thing you need is you need to do some surety about long-term sustainability. The investment of \$100 000—we have to have some surety for four or five years at a minimum, right?

Mr BARTON: So the government should really make a commitment whether they want to have a taxi industry or not.

Mr WELLS: Yes.

Mr BARTON: We want to hear the minister tell us they want to have a taxi industry, and then we can build a plan to make sure we have a taxi industry in five years and in 10 years and in 20 years.

Mr WELLS: Yes. They are all small examples, but they build a picture that we get the vibe we are not wanted, right? We are part of the public transport system, so why is it that we have got different cleaning regulations to the rest of the public transport system? Trains, trams and buses—I do not know whether you have been on them—they only get cleaned once a day. We have to clean in-between passengers. Are our passengers more filthy than the people who get on buses? Not only do we have to clean between passengers, we have got to record those cleaning sheets, and we have to keep those sheets for 12 months. We are the only industry in the state that has to do that. Is that because we are so filthy?

Mr BARTON: May I say: we are the only state in the country that is doing this as well.

Mr WELLS: Yes. A few years back, before deregulation, roadworthy certificates had to be sent to the TSC, right? And if you wanted to put a car on the road, you had to get a letter from a booking service provider, so cars could only go on the road if they were affiliated cars. Now that we do not have a compulsory affiliation, the CPVV have stopped getting roadworthy certificates and are saying it is the responsibility of the BSP, when we have got 25 per cent of the fleet not affiliated with a BSP, and they are rebranding themselves as the safety regulator. It does not make sense. I have got phone calls this morning from the guys in Wang saying, 'CPVV have been up there doing a safety inspection. Where is your requirement on medicals for your drivers?'. It was only four months ago that CPVV stopped asking for medicals when you get the DC, and now they are telling the BSPs that we have got to arrange for medicals. We are not doctors. They are asking, 'Have we trained the people in how to clean the car?'. We have not received any training. So if it is that complicated that people need to be trained, surely some training should have come out of the CPVV. Every day there is more and more bureaucracy being thrown at all BSPs, but it is really affecting the small ones who work from a kitchen table.

Mr BARTON: The irony of course, Colin, is that the deregulation of the industry was going to get rid of all the red tape. Do we think we have more red tape these days than we did previously? Yes.

Mr WELLS: Absolutely, absolutely, and it is unfortunate. Look, all the services are different. I mean, a classic example, and you can ask Tammy O'Connor when she comes in about the small-town operators: Tammy was in Hamilton to go to her grandmother's—I think it was her 80th; she will be able to tell you—birthday party. The three cousins had been to the pub and had a few drinks. They were going back to Nan's afterwards. They get in the taxi, and they do not know where Nan lives. They do not know Nan's address. The driver looked at Tammy and said, 'Oh, my God. You'd have to be an O'Connor, wouldn't you?' And she said, 'Yes'. 'Are you here for your grandmother's party?'. 'Yes'. And he took her there. It is just a different world in the smaller communities, right?

Mr BARTON: We love it.

Mr WELLS: I have got a wheelchair client who is the daughter of a guy I was in grade 6 with. I have a wheelchair client who is my mate's ex-girlfriend when she was 18. We are in a community. We are known. So if we do the wrong thing we have got to face these people when we go to the supermarket. So sometimes not having a written-out plan does not mean we are not doing the right thing, and sometimes the big corporations who can write a plan really well but no-one follows it, they get ticked off, because, 'Yes, yes. You've got your safety plan. You're doing everything right'. No, no, you have just got some paper that says you are going to do everything right. It does not mean a thing. We need to step back a little bit from the bureaucracy; just let us do our job.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for that, Colin. Unfortunately our time has come to an end, but it has been a really, really intense experience that you have shared with the committee today.

Mr FINN: Mr Chairman, could I just say to Colin—

The CHAIR: Yes, Mr Finn.

Mr FINN: I have been sitting on these committees for 20-something years now, which is a very long time, and I think it would be safe to say that Colin is the most impressive witness that I have seen to this point. So I thank him for his contribution and I thank him particularly for his passion—and for God's sake, do not let it go.

The CHAIR: Well said, Deputy Chair. Thank you, Mr Finn. Thank you, Colin and the Victorian Tax Association.

Mr WELLS: Before I go, honestly I do not want a media circus, but any one of you at any time is welcome to come to my depot, to any of the member depots, and just experience it firsthand so you get to speak to the people that we are delivering this service to.

Mr BARTON: It will do them a lot of good, Colin.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that opportunity. On that note, Colin, we will need to take a short break as our next witnesses are here, but again, I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for sharing your lived experience. It was very touching, and you really outlined some of the unique challenges that this subsector of the sector has compared to many of the other transport sectors.

Mr BARTON: Now, Colin, next time you do one of these I want you not to be so shy and I want you to express yourself better!

The CHAIR: You did fantastically, by the way. I love your candour. I thank Mr Barton too.

Witness withdrew.