

# Taxis the last cab off the rank

**Paul Nicolaou**



**O**ur taxi industry is caught in a slow-moving existential crisis and it's not because of the driverless cabs we've been hearing about lately.

In the past two years alone, we've lost 600 taxis in NSW due to a homegrown crisis. Numerous regional centres have lost their taxis entirely.

At this rate, the 5500-strong taxi fleet will be cut by more than half within 10 years if there's no change to a regulatory system that imposes punitive operating costs on taxis that rideshare operators don't have to pay.

Taxis most likely to disappear are the wheelchair assist vehicles that offer the disabled special care. Business Sydney has backed our member organisation, the NSW Taxi Council, in asking

Premier Chris Minns to intervene.

We know that our taxi industry has suffered from an image problem and it has had to act to weed out rogue operators.

However, it doesn't change the fact that our point-to-point transport regime is riddled with inequity.

Taxis and rideshare offer a similar public transport service but are subject to different regulatory systems, with taxis covered by a legacy of regulations that don't apply to rideshare.

They range from mere irritants to very costly anti-competitive whacks. Taxi drivers must always display photo ID during a driving shift but there's no such rule for rideshare. Unlike rideshare, taxi operators must carry workers compensation of around \$2000 per vehicle.

The biggest inequity is a glaring disparity in relation to compulsory third party insurance premiums. Metropolitan taxis pay CTP premiums of up to \$6000 per vehicle and for regional operators it's up to \$5200. Rideshare operators only pay the private vehicle rate of around \$700.

Little wonder cabs are fast disappearing and Kiama, Milton-Ulladulla, Wellington, Narromine and Uralla have already lost their taxi services.

We'll keep advocating to Chris Minns for sensible reform of a system that's broken.

**Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney**