

We The People

Program 201

We the People The Hansom Cab



Good day to you. The hansom cab was designed in 1834 by Joseph Hansom, an architect from York as a substantial improvement on the old hackney carriages. These two-wheel vehicles were fast, light enough to be pulled by a single horse and were agile enough to steer around horse-drawn vehicles in the notorious traffic jams of nineteenth-century London. The hansom cab changed public transport for the better and did so through independent innovation. It was a taxi cab as we know it today. Real innovation is usually delivered through 'need' and most often not by governments. In fact, once the bureaucracy gets hold of a new development they try and regulate the life out of it and so over-governance stifles further invention and innovation. Less government means more liberty and more creativity and improvement.

Taxi cabs have been around for centuries and fundamentally do a good job. Then the government steps in and backed by the unions, we end up with a very heavily regulated industry, where the cost to the traveller is outrageous. The combined mechanism of control and protection embeds into the taxi service so many costs its fares have become unreasonably high. My daughter paid taxi fares of \$80 ten years ago to get back to Robina early in the morning from Surfers Paradise. So the scene was set for innovation driven by demand and so arrives a new and very innovative company called **Uber**. The word Uber comes from the German meaning above or ultimate when taken up by American slang. The Uber service provides an alternative to taxis in that private citizens use their own vehicle for ride-sharing and this is surely innovation by any measure. The way it works is beautifully simple.....a passenger calls for a car with a smart-phone running the free Uber app. An Uber driver then is immediately called to the passenger's location who takes the passenger to their destination. No cash is exchanged, payment is taken automatically from the passenger's debit card and no tip is required. I have seen the service in action, spoken with Uber drivers and seen the smart phone app for myself. Its highly efficient and very clever and meets the market need. The cars are clean and don't smell like decomposing faecal matter.

Now step in the bureaucracy and the unions who don't want a bar of Uber because it offers a real alternative to the ubiquitous taxi cab. There are other benefits too in that it allows ordinary people to have a job using their own motor vehicle and most speak the Queens English. So where is the down side? Well in my view there isn't one but the bureaucracy is in absolute turmoil trying to control free enterprise. Quite recently a cowardly and regressive Queensland State government probably in cahoots with the Taxi Council of Queensland passed new regulations providing huge penalties for Uber drivers. The GM of Uber Australia, David Rohrsheim claims the Queensland government will not meet with him to discuss the matter and if so, in my view, they have failed to meet the charter of a democratic government of the people. Anastacia Palaszczuk like some other Labor governments are irretrievably wedded to the unions which are desperately trying to protect their antiquated taxi kingdom monopoly. Uber, like other industries is not without its problems but they seem relatively small by comparison and the best news is that Uber can be significantly cheaper than a taxi, so it's a win for the people.

The Queensland Minister for Transport, Sterling Hinchcliff, when asked about the matter said he was in favour of innovation but not if it breaks the law. Now there's an oxymoron if ever there was one. Mr Hinchcliffe, the law was made before Uber existed and so if you crush innovation by using outdated laws then it clearly shows your government is compromised between agendas and what's in the best interest of we the people. A rattled antiquated taxi industry and a fossilised state government have now introduced draconian penalties of such proportions that it defies free enterprise logic. The new penalties apply for having the gall to innovate in Queensland now with fines up to \$2,300 for drivers and \$23,000 for administrators.

Innovation heralds disruptive change while the arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. The Queensland government would have banned the hansom cab in 1834.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley