

Statement on behalf of Taxi Alliance of Ireland  
Presented by Kevin Barrett

I would like to thank the Chairman and the committee for inviting me to speak here today. I am a representative of the Taxi Alliance of Ireland operating in Tipperary and I have worked in the taxi industry for nearly 30 years. There are several issues that I would like to bring to the committee's attention today. It is clear that with the loss of numerous drivers over the past several years that people in this country are finding it more and more difficult to get taxis. Below are some of the reasons why this is happening and possible ways to solve these issues.

1. There are a large number of illegal operators across the country. In the past 12 months, we have had success in catching some of these individuals with the help of Gardai and the National Transport Authority enforcement officers. However, many of these illegal operators continue to work as the Gardai and National Transport Authority do not have the resources to catch all of them. One way to solve this issue is the establishment of a Transport police who have the powers to deal with this issue and would have the resources to deal with this problem on a permanent basis. In order for more people to join the taxi industry particularly in rural Ireland, these illegal operators need to be dealt with immediately before we lose more drivers.
2. Another issue I would like to bring to your attention is the buy back of Taxi plates. In order to recruit more taxi drivers to join the industry, we need to make this process easier to engage in. At present if a driver retires or leaves the industry, they cannot transfer their SPSV plate to another individual. We feel that if transfer of plate and other business areas (phone, cars) was easier, it would entice people to join the industry.
3. To provide more SPSV operators available for closing time of pubs and nightclubs, we need to get the committee to consider asking vintners association to come forward with a proposal to stagger the closing times of these establishments. This would reduce the number of people looking for taxis all at once at peak times on the weekends. It would also reduce stress of taxi drivers trying to provide a service as they can become overwhelmed with people trying to get taxis at those peak times.
4. The Taxi Alliance of Ireland is a voluntary organisation to help in the SPSV industry for urban and rural Ireland. We want to our industry to be professional as any other industry in our country.

Please feel free to ask me any questions about the above issues. Thank you.