



"A history of land transport regulation in South Australia:  
the relevance of public choice theory"

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## Summary

This dissertation uses a history of land transport regulation in South Australia to test public choice interpretations of political behaviour. This model has individuals, whether as members of interest groups, politicians or bureaucrats, acting in their own individual self-interest, at the expense of the broader community interest. Those with a focussed economic stake will usually overcome the interests of consumers and the wider public, often in alliance with the regulatory agency.

The histories of taxi, truck and tram and bus regulation provide only patchy support for this view of politics. While the interest groups did act in the way expected of them, producers did not always have their way. The evidence provides little support for the public choice view of the bureaucrat, as the regulators are generally seen to implement the regulations as intended by the legislators in the interest of both the industry and the broader community. The politician is generally reactive, with party discipline preventing the expression of personal self-interest.

Failure of the public choice school to successfully predict political and administrative behaviour is largely ascribed to a simplistic view of human nature and the constraints on the exercise of personal self-interest imposed by South Australia's political and administrative institutions.