

**Submission
No 17**

INQUIRY INTO HEAVY VEHICLE SAFETY AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY

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Inquiry into heavy vehicle safety and use of technology to improve road safety

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute ideas that may assist in reducing the rate of heavy vehicle accidents. This is a complex problem that needs the full attention of everyone within the supply chain, as well as Government. Until now the sole focus has been truck drivers, and to a lesser degree, truck owners.

Parking

One very important issue that needs to be discussed is the lack of suitable parking for heavy vehicles within our major cities. There is almost no provision made by any level of Government to provide parking for large commercial vehicles. Indeed, local Government seems determined to harass and fine heavy vehicle drivers attempting to meet the fatigue requirements of HVNL.

Both Local and State Government have a duty to provide parking for heavy vehicles in the areas they control. It is not good enough for them to pretend it is not their responsibility. They establish industrial areas within our cities and make no effort to ensure the trucks servicing these areas have somewhere to park, with adequate facilities, for both short and long fatigue breaks.

Currently the only parking available for trucks in most major cities is provided by large commercial service centres. These are almost always full, and many truck drivers must find somewhere else to park. They resort to side streets in industrial areas, where they have no facilities at all. They are often fined by local council rangers for parking there.

The lack of adequate parking and facilities for truck drivers in our cities contributes significantly to the fatigue issues on our highways. A driver who has not had adequate sleep will be a danger to other road users that night, whether the work diary has recorded the required break or not. It cannot be considered an adequate rest break when the driver has spent half the night searching for somewhere to park and worrying about being fined for parking in the only spot available.

This situation could be addressed using modern technology by developing an app for a mobile device designed to show drivers where the nearest legal parking and facilities are. This would allow drivers to plan where they will have their required rest break after unloading.

This app would of course only be beneficial if there were parking areas provided in our major cities. Currently the app would have shamefully little information to display.

Safety Technology

Modern trucks also offer a range of safety features that help make our roads safer. Autonomous Emergency Braking, Active Cruise Control, Electronic Stability Control and other technology is now available in many new trucks. The State Governments could allow these newer, safer trucks to be introduced more quickly into fleets by allowing a significant stamp duty discount for any vehicle fitted with this technology.

This same technology is also available in many new cars and light commercial vehicles. Allowing stamp duty relief for these vehicles would speed up their introduction. This technology helps protect car drivers, who are often distracted by mobile devices while driving.

Supply Chain

Everyone in the supply chain is responsible for ensuring heavy vehicle drivers are well rested and complying with the HVNL. The focus has been on the drivers and other players within the supply chain need to be better educated. When drivers are held up for hours at either end of their trip it has a strong negative effect on safety. Strict time slots and drawn out loading procedures need to be modified to help drivers better manage their fatigue.

If a load is going to be delayed at either end the driver must be given the opportunity to rest. They should not be expected to sit around waiting. It is the responsibility of those handling the freight to advise the driver of the delay and allow the driver to choose how they spend the extra time waiting. The driver can be alerted by mobile phone when, and only when, the truck has been loaded or unloaded.

Conclusion

There is a lot that can be done to help make our roads safer, and to limit the number of crashes involving heavy vehicles. The availability of suitable parking for heavy vehicles in our cities is a huge problem that needs to be addressed immediately. As the number of trucks increases, and our cities grow, this problem will be harder to solve the longer we ignore it.

The Government should reduce stamp duty on newer, safer trucks and cars to encourage their introduction.

All members of the supply chain should be made aware of their responsibility to ensure truck drivers are well rested. Government agencies and the Police should focus a little more on this part of the problem, and a little less on public relations exercises attempting to show the public they are cracking down on rogue truck drivers.

Regards,

Mark Reynolds