

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

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As an Owner Operator in the Transport Industry, I see and hear many areas that need improving and refining.

The Industry is one of the most regulated and heavily scrutinized by law, media and the public. This is the main stress to all involved, drivers, Owner Operators and larger companies.

The many committees and panels of 'experts' involved in making laws, deciding how and where to build roads and amenities, aren't involved directly in our Industry or have lost touch with the 'on the tar' operations of the Industry.

When starting a process of making decisions that affect our Industry, listen to our Industry, those who are 'on the tar'. Once more understanding in these areas has started then things will improve. Those who hold the Infrastructure and Transport portfolios need to learn about our Industry, many have little or selective knowledge which can at times to themselves become embarrassing.

Education of all road users is needed urgently, it needs to start as young as primary school ages and continue through to seniors and new citizens of our country. Too many people can get behind the wheel of any sized vehicle or motor bike and aren't prepared or capable to be in control of said vehicles. An understanding of blind spots, braking distances seem to be the greatest fact when it comes to the accidents involved with our Industry. Road users seem to think at times that they have an entitlement to priority over our vehicle combinations, this leads to many altercations and deaths that sadly in the media is reflected as our fault.

With the introduction of driver training businesses, it has been evident that some of those are in need of an education or cancelled practise. Going from a HR to a MC licence in two (2) days can not install the knowledge and experience that is needed to operate in this Industry. In many instances it seems a lot like, pay the money, I sign you off, and you get your licence. This is unacceptable, it isn't giving us suitable drivers it is making possible 'accidents waiting to happen'. A major review of these businesses is needed to help the industry and ensure public safety.

Whilst the 'Work Diary' is needed to monitor the Industries workers, it could do with a factor of flexibility. Whilst the 'Electronic Diary' is an idea, it won't cure the factor of accidents occurring, as they are accidents, more than often a result of a third party. This expense should not be forced on smaller companies or Owner Operators who have the ability to successfully monitor their fatigue.

The provision of more and better equipped Rest Areas for the Heavy Vehicle Industry needs to be addressed better, after all our Industry is required to have regulated fatigue breaks. For example, 160km stretch of the newly built Pacific Highway between Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour only has two (2) Rest Areas with amenities and two (2) service centres with food and amenities. More of these in closer distances need to be provided as trucks just can't stop on the side of the highway is the driver needs to sleep.

As witnessed after the two (2) day spate of industry deaths in January, M1, Brocklehurst and Jackajery, a major Compliance Blitz was launched. Yet there was not the same MEDIA REPORTED blitz after the December 15 2017 to January 2 2018 'Operation Safe Arrival', the death toll was twenty seven motorists. These were all non Heavy Vehicle deaths. These deaths were not caused by our Industry, yet no blitz on the rest of the road users. The law offices and media has a quick response when a heavy vehicle is involved but no frenzy was evident when our industry isn't involved.



Technology has been touted as the future and saviour of our industry, some of the technology that is being used such as the Guardian System has proven it has strong merits, some others are over the top to say the least. Technology will have its flaws and so do humans, but is our countries infrastructure suited to all of it, I really don't think it is.

Suggestions by 'experts' to a reduction of speed limits in regional areas is sure to contribute to the possibility of fatigue, impatience and accidents by all road users. These people need to talk to the people and businesses that use these roads in the areas to get the real picture.

Roadwork signage and zones are another basic issue that needs to be addressed as well. They contribute to road safety issues as well. The signage left in areas for extended periods of time, whilst no or little work is being done. The possibility of an accident happening is high when regular road users are getting impatient with the zones being in place for what seems little results. Visibility as well, mainly at light is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Road safety is the most important subject to our industry, we need to go back to basics, review, correct but not complicate or burden its workers anymore than they already are. After all, the country and its citizens really do rely on our industry.

*Maggie Welsh*

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