

SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Road Freight NSW

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The Hon. Lou Amato, MLC
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attn: Mr Kieran Lewis, Committee Manager — Staysafe
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RE: Road Freight NSW submission for the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)

The Hon. Lou Amato,

Road Freight NSW (RFNSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Staysafe inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional New South Wales.

Road Freight NSW (RFNSW) is the peak industry organisation in NSW, established in 1893, representing the trucking and road freight industry sector — we are ‘The voice of the road transport industry in NSW’. Our members (operators) range from some of the nation’s largest heavy vehicle transport operators — BlueScope, DHL, Toll — through to family business operators like Vellex, Border Express and Hannah’s Haulage, representing thousands of employees across NSW. RFNSW also represents operators with cross-jurisdictional freight movements, services, and/or logistical operations, in the ACT, Queensland, and Victoria. The objective of RFNSW is to advocate for safe positive change across the industry.

RFNSW recognises that regional roads are the backbone of our state’s transportation corridors servicing hundreds of regional communities, towns, and cities. A recent report by the NTI’s National Truck Accident Research Centre showed that while freight and heavy vehicle movements has increased by 50 per cent, fatigue-related crashes involving heavy vehicles fell from 27 per cent in 2005 to eight per cent in 2021 (NTARC, 2021). RFNSW supports the funding boost from the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Sam Faraway, for regional locations, as outlined in *The 2026 Road Safety Action Plan* (including the additional funding initiatives under *The Savings Lives on Country Roads initiative*).

RFNSW seeks the following outcomes from the Staysafe inquiry:

- safer regional roads through further education measures for reducing traffic incidents and/or fatalities;
- safer regional roads through repairing existing regional road infrastructure;
- safer regional roads through improved repair and widening of some regional roads to support large heavy vehicles such as the B-double and other PBS vehicles;
- safer regional roads through increased access to heavy vehicle rest areas;
- Safer regional roads through by-pass lane access routes for heavy vehicles (avoiding high density areas and school crossing zones);

- Safer regional roads through consistent speed limits across regional NSW and;
- safer regional roads through smart technology heavy vehicles.

These outcomes will support enhancements to existing road infrastructure while reducing confusion (and in many cases) contradictory speed limits in regional NSW — consistency and clarity for heavy vehicle operators and all road users.

Recent member surveys conducted by RFNSW showed that crash incidents of heavy vehicle operators were due to speed limits exceeding road conditions, exacerbated by recent heavy rains that have deteriorated the quality of regional roads. NTARC (2021) concluded that one in eight heavy vehicle incidents were caused by improper speed relative to the road conditions — but not due to exceeding the speed limit. A review of speed limits, relative to road conditions, across regional NSW will help address safety on our roads.

RFNSW acknowledges the many positive externalities associated with regional road infrastructure outcomes for B-double and other large PBS vehicles. As increasingly more goods are transported by heavy vehicle operators across NSW, B-doubles are larger, therefore can carry more, reducing the number of heavy vehicles on our roads — potentially reducing the level of incidents and/or fatalities on regional roads in NSW.

Technology will play an ever-increasing role in regional road safety. Calls by peak industry bodies for embedded technologies and smart braking systems in heavy vehicles will go a long way at monitoring, mitigating, and addressing issues of road safety.

Many regional roads have been devastated by ongoing rains and floods, RFNSW understands there is no better time to upgrade regional roads. RFNSW will collaborate with its' members, and partner with industry bodies, regional councils, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), Transport for NSW, and law enforcement to address road safety concerns in regional NSW.

RFNSW suggests that freight has not been in living memory under as much pressure as we are seeing today and for the last 2 and a half years. Freight respects the need to ensure we have appropriate speeds around schools and towns and regional city centres. However, reducing the speed on major arterials will not assist freight or our customers and community; improving road conditions will make a significant contribution not to just to freight but to the national economy and also cost pressures and importantly safety on our roads

I would be pleased to appear before you in person to elaborate on this submission and to detail for you the pressures freight faces on regional roads and how we can make regional roads safer.

Regards

Simon O'Hara
CEO
Road Freight NSW