

That Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts inquire into and report on the pressures on heavy vehicle drivers and the impact of these pressures on driver practice and observance of regulatory obligations in New South Wales, and in particular:

**a) the characteristics of the heavy vehicle industry in New South Wales that shape driver practice**

The characteristics of the Industry are defined by the nature of the beast ie: relentless pressure from the customer , transport owner Vs regulators has been a predominate feature facing drivers throughout the last five decades

**(b) the current and future extent, nature and impact of pressures on driver practice and observance of regulatory obligations by heavy vehicle drivers in New South Wales, in particular:**

As the Economy grows along with the added increase in population, congestion on the road network will worsen. Pressure will therefore increase exponentially making it harder for drivers to meet ever tightening expectations that encroach across regulatory obligations. Just get it done is a familiar catch cry in the road transport industry. Drivers have always faced pressure from the Boss and from transport customers to achieve this regardless of the consequences

**(i) its contribution to the ongoing occurrence of over height vehicle incidents and**

The road system has been geared to 4.3 mts height restriction for decades

The Industry lobbied for 4.6 mts to cater for cubic freight without considering the consequences for the road network

Height sensors are set too low in case of transgression, but the reality is most so- called breaches are because the low setting has produced false reading of overheight vehicles

**(ii) its impact on the use of rest areas and other fatigue management practices**

While the rest area debate has been going on for a decade the long term solution is being examined in separate inquiries ATM The problem with Fatigue Management is the onerous obligations that have been placed on drivers to satisfy the needs of the industry not the driver. Reduced work hours would alleviate the need for power naps. There is obviously a need for more parking areas for heavy vehicles but there are also arguments that need to be made for why Fatigue Management issues need to be addressed to alleviate the need for drivers to drive tired.

**(c) the impact, effectiveness and enforcement of current mechanisms to address current and future pressures and their impacts on heavy vehicle drivers in New South Wales, in particular:**

The impact and effectiveness of enforcement as regards to current mechanisms is felt by drivers when they are examined in minute detail roadside, every drive feels trepidation approaching a manned weighbridge or roadside enforcement site, not because they have done anything wrong but because of their previous interactions with roadside Enforcement officers. These Operations are results driven and therefore officers are likely to apply a blow torch to come up with a fine to bolster statistics in the press release.

**(i) training requirements for heavy vehicle drivers**

The current training requirements for heavy vehicle drivers are woefully inadequate. The driver licensing system has been downgraded to minimum standards, for instance you can upgrade from Class HC to MC in 1 day There is no requirement to show proficiency in loading nor is there a

requirement to have any experience in the road transport industry or operational skills. We need to start to train drivers to be proficient in the basic skills required to safely load, prepare and operate the equipment they use.

### **(iii) training and education requirements for companies employing heavy vehicle drivers**

The Transport Industry has traditionally been lax in training, upskilling and examining best practice solutions for their drivers. The reasons for this vary from company to company with the overall reluctance to train drivers is the adage that they train drivers and then they leave so why should we teach them? My answer to that old chestnut is to say noir the job was better why would they leave? It is up to the Transporter Industry to train, teach and skill their own workforce. This attitude has left the Industry in the position it is today.

### **(iii) penalties for over height vehicle incidents**

Penalties for overheight vehicles have risen dramatically over the last 5 years but still we have a problem with this issue, Why? The answer is penalising the driver of most of these overheight offences are targeting the wrong culprit. The Government legislated for these 4.6. Metre Trailers after constant lobbying from Industry representatives without analysing the unintended consequences this can still be rectified without too much effort.

### **(iv) other mechanisms to address over height vehicle incidents**

I have contacted Transport for NSW, TransUrban and the RMS over this issue to no avail. I have a solution to this problem if someone is willing to take this matter seriously

### **(v) the availability, suitability and accessibility of, and priority locations for heavy vehicle rest areas in metropolitan Sydney, and rural and regional New South Wales**

I have long been critical of the lack of rest areas in Sydney for Heavy Vehicles, for instance there is no rest area on any Motorway in Sydney for heavy vehicles and yet when they were constructed, I suggested setting aside areas that were utilised by the Construction firms during the building process to no avail. There is an obvious solution to this problem today.

I think that the rural and regional; issue could be solved by Government working in partnership with Fuel companies in doubling the size of rest areas at truck stops by utilising surrounding land to existing and future truck stops either. resuming parcels of land or leasing some crown land to enhance the land available for truck stop parking. The locations for these stops would be a collaboration between the Stakeholders but must include driver representatives.

### **(vi) the suitability of heavy vehicle rest areas in terms of size, facilities, lighting, signage, and safety**

This would be covered by incorporating fuel stops and rest areas as one entity.

### **(vii) the use of heavy vehicle rest areas and emergency stopping bays for fatigue management and logbook obligations**

Emergency stopping bays should only be used for short periods to check vehicles and loads or to complete work diaries or paperwork. I strongly encourage driver so not sleep in these bays unless it is an emergency because of the danger they present with fast moving heavy vehicles passing by within metres it represents huge danger

**(viii) the relevance, practicality and timeliness of existing heavy vehicle rest area strategies and programs given best practice fatigue management and regulatory requirements**

The majority of today's parking areas for heavy vehicles would not pass best practice parameters nor would they be construed as ideal for quality rest spots. I have seldom used them over the last 15 years as I prefer to leave the highway and seek a more suitable area.

**(ix) identification of international best practice design guidelines and requirements for heavy vehicle rest areas and their suitability for New South Wales**

It is difficult to imagine that international standards for heavy vehicle rest areas could be used or adapted considering our unique challenges in distance and sparse spread of population. However, the USA is more aligned with us in regards to having rest facilities at truck stops.

**(d) the capability for new and emerging technologies to assist in reducing pressures for heavy vehicle drivers and effect driver practice and observance of regulatory obligations, such as through training, implementing safety measures and fatigue management**

One of the key strategies today should be to align Regulatory and Commercial obligations inline with current technical and information technology. It should be focused on best practice outcomes not enforcement strategies that have always been a focus of the past. Previous history shows that doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is a folly. The carrot and stick principle should always be a part of the push to a safer and more prosperous Transport Industry. Chain of Responsibility is playing an ever-growing role in transport operations as it should. The day of the driver being the only scapegoat for all the problems in the industry is fast approaching. Employers, Consignors and Receivers must face up to their role in the improper practices fostered on its workforce and work to end the pressure that is placed on their drivers.

Brian Turpie. past President LongHaul Drivers Association