

INQUIRY INTO ROAD TOLLING REGIMES

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 21 May 2021

Partially
Confidential

STATEMENT

1. My name is . I am a Contract Carrier who both works and resides in New South Wales.
2. I appreciate the opportunity to make the following statement to the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Road Tolling Regimes, conducted by Portfolio Committee Number 6 – Transport and Customer Service.
3. I hope that my decades of experience as a Contract Carrier will assist the inquiry in understanding the ability or otherwise of trucking businesses to afford increases in tolling charges and the extent or otherwise of their ability to pass this through.
4. I am a Contract Carrier who operates a Freightliner semi-trailer that pulls a company side loader.
5. I have worked as a Contract Carrier for my Principal Contractor for approximately twenty-three (23) years.
6. I am contracted for a twelve (12) month period. My contract has been renewed every twelve (12) months for approximately twenty-three (23) years.
7. As a Contract Carrier, I have worked exclusively for my Principal Contractor.
8. I decided to work as a Contract Carrier as I was seeking a change in lifestyle insofar as I wanted to work in an industry that gave me independence and self-sufficiency, in comparison to traditional transport industry workers. The prospect of being my own boss appealed to me and I wanted to be a small business owner.
9. I am a financial member of the Transport Workers' Union of NSW (TWU). I have been a member of the TWU for approximately six (6) years.
10. I am the elected TWU co-delegate at the yard I am based at. I was elected as the TWU co-delegate approximately two (2) years ago. As the TWU co-delegate, Contract Carriers often raise concerns with me about the rising cost of operating a small business and their concerns about whether they can continue operating into the future if nothing changes.
11. When I commenced work as a Contract Carrier, I was able to make a decent living. Consecutively, over years working as a Contract Carrier, the profession has become less profitable. A combination of expenses, including but not limited to toll charges, fuel prices and the rising cost of registration has put financial pressure on me as a Contract Carrier.
12. Within my working life as a Contract Carrier, there has been a rapid introduction of new toll motorways throughout Sydney. These motorways seem to become more expensive year on year for heavy vehicles. Some toll motorways within Sydney are charged at the rate of approximately \$25 one way. Often within a working day you have to use multiple tollways, causing expenses to add up quickly.
13. In my experience, other expenses payable by Contract Carriers also rise every year, such as the price of insurance, which makes it difficult to stay afloat. This is worsened by the fact that the rates Contract Carriers are paid does not reflect the reality of our rising expenses.
14. Unlike other Principal Contractors, approximately ten (10) years ago, my Principal Contractor provided Contract Carriers with e-tags. This alleviated some financial pressure I was encountering as a Contract Carrier.

15. The e-tags provided to Contract Carriers are registered under are paid solely by the Principal Contractor.
16. I believe that the introduction of e-tags was negotiated by past TWU delegates. Given this occurred some years ago, I cannot recall the specifics of what prompted my Principal Contractor to provide Contract Carriers with e-tags.
17. Contract Carriers working for my Principal Contractor are allowed to use the e-tags provided to us whilst engaged in work, however we are not allowed to use these e-tags on the way to and from work.
18. In my experience, my Principal Contractor does not limit me from using tollways, as long as the charge is associated with work. I do not recall ever being told by a Manager to not take specific routes that charge for tolls.
19. I am rarely directed not to take a specific route to a destination purely on the associated toll costs, with exception of one of my Principle Contractor's clients that refuses to compensate for toll costs.
20. I service the same customers so my work is reasonably repetitive. I take multiple tollways daily. If I didn't have the e-tag provided by my Principal Contractor, it would be almost impossible for me to continue to make ends meet.
21. On average, I estimate that I use approximately \$200 dollars' worth of tolls daily. Attached to this statement and marked 'GF-01' is a copy of my toll statement showing the daily costs incurred by using tollways. If I was not provided an e-tag, paying approximately \$1000 a week on tolls would make it commercially unviable for me to continue operating as a small business owner.
22. If my Principle Contractor did not provide me with an e-tag and I was paid my current rate, I imagine I would stop working as a Contract Carrier and instead commence work for another transport company as a traditional employee.
23. If I had to pay for my tolls, it would be impossible for me to balance my expenses and earnings and still make a profit to maintain my vehicle and live off.
24. Prior to my Principle Contractor providing me with an e-tag, I would avoid using tolls whenever possible. Often it was not possible to avoid tolls.
25. When I did encounter a toll expense, I would try and claim a reimbursement from my Principle Contractor for the expense. In doing so, I would complete a physical form and provide it to the Supervisor. This was effectively me involving the Principal Contractor for an expense encountered in the course of work. I would then have the toll expense placed in my account additional to my wage.
26. Whilst my Principle Contractor often reimbursed Contract Carriers for toll expenses, the onus was still on Contract Carriers to pay the upfront expense of the toll charge. Considering Contract Carriers work on tight margins, it was another financial pressure on the backs of small businesspeople.
27. Working as a Contract Carrier is a difficult balancing act that, given the rising costs of operating, is less viable and far less profitable than it was twenty-three (23) years ago.