



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Leader of the House

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Mr Mat Dockerty
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Dear Mr Dockerty

Thank you for your email dated 23 November 2011 about road safety and heavy vehicles.

You have clearly given a lot of consideration to the issues you have raised and I greatly appreciate the time you have taken to pass on your views.

I have noted your concerns about the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal legislation which will set pay or pay-related conditions for truck drivers. The Australian Government believes the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal will make Australia's roads safer for all users by ensuring that truck drivers are paid reasonably for the work they do, getting rid of the economic incentive for drivers to take unacceptable risks on our roads and we see this policy as being complementary to other road safety initiatives.

As you have noted, further information about the cause of truck accidents is available in an industry survey released in April by Australia's largest heavy vehicle insurer, National Transport Insurance (NTI). NTI's April 2011 report found that:

- Since 2002, the frequency of serious truck crashes has decreased by 27 per cent.
- B Doubles carry 46 per cent of freight yet account for only 28 per cent of serious truck crashes, suggesting that some larger combinations move freight more safely.
- In fatal crashes involving other vehicles, the other driver was at fault in 82 per cent of the accidents.

Using robust evidence, such as detailed in the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics and NTI report, the Government recognises that heavy vehicle practices are only one factor contributing to the safety of our roads. This is reflected in the wide-ranging action agenda presented in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020, which I released earlier this year on behalf of the Australian Transport Council <www.atcouncil.gov.au>.

I note your comments about point-to-point speed camera technology. The evaluation evidence shows that point-to-point (or average speed) enforcement can significantly improve compliance with speed limits. The national strategy encourages states and territories to implement these systems where appropriate and, as you have indicated, some jurisdictions have already invested in this technology. I would point out, however, that Victoria is the only jurisdiction currently using point-to-point speed enforcement for light vehicles.

On the issue of driving hours, legislation in force in states and territories requires many heavy vehicle drivers to keep a written work diary, recording hours of work and rest. The Government is participating in a pilot to test Electronic Work Diaries (EWD) to help determine if recording work and rest could be better done electronically for some operators.

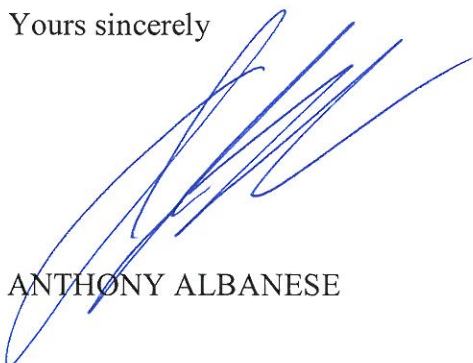
EWDs should significantly reduce the likelihood of inadvertent transcription errors including spelling mistakes or recording incorrectly the day or date, making it easier for truck drivers to comply with fatigue legislation. EWDs may also reduce the amount of time needed to accurately record work and rest time. The pilot aims to establish if EWDs are feasible, and if so, the requirements of an acceptable system for operators that wish to use them. Commercial electronic record-keeping systems already exist in the transport industry, but EWDs differ from commercial systems in that they collect information in a form that meets regulatory requirements. For more information please see <www.ewd.gov.au>.

In addition to our strong commitment to improving road safety, the Government is working with the state and territory governments to reduce the regulatory burden and red tape on truck drivers. In July 2009, all jurisdictions, through the Council of Australian Governments, agreed to implement a system of nationally consistent regulations for heavy vehicles by 1 January 2013. Heavy vehicle national laws will help to address inconsistent regulatory practices between the states and territories – which have been a continuing source of frustration for the trucking industry.

Finally, in order to facilitate additional rest opportunities for heavy vehicle drivers, the Government implemented the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program (HVSPP) in 2008. The Government has committed \$70 million under the HVSPP between 2008-09 and 2011-12, for projects nominated by states and territories including the provision of new rest areas and the upgrading of existing public roadside facilities. So far this program has provided funding to upgrade 67 rest stops as well as the construction of 32 new rest stops.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely



ANTHONY ALBANESE