



THE ATA'S PLAN FOR TRUCK DRIVER LICENSING

Improving training and assessment

The quality of training by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) is highly variable. Many RTOs do a great job. Others train to a price or a time.

Driver training RTOs should be assessed by experienced auditors who understand driver training and competencies.

The ATA recognises that more driver trainers would be needed under this plan.

Minimum behind the wheel training times

Austrroads recommended there be minimum behind the wheel training times.

The ATA agrees, but the driver training experts at our 2024 Workforce and Driver Training Summit considered its proposed training times should be higher.

The ATA's training experts recommended that the minimum behind the wheel training time to move from a rigid to a heavy combination licence should be 40 hours, rather than the 11 hours proposed by Austrroads.

This training time is intended as a starting point for discussion. It is for automatic vehicles and does not include classroom or assessment time.

Advancing through the truck licence classes

Drivers currently advance through the truck licence classes based on the time they have held each licence, followed by training and competency tests.

Austrroads instead proposed that drivers be able to advance along three pathways—

- the current time based pathway, but drivers would not be able to go straight from HR to MC
- a driving experience pathway, which would enable an MR/HR driver to progress to HC after 600 hours of MR/HR driving over 26 weeks and an MC licence after 700 hours of HC driving over a further 26 weeks
- a supervision pathway. An MR/HR driver could progress to HC after 420 hours of MR/HR driving, 6x2 hour supervised driving blocks and 12 weeks. The driver could then progress to MC after 560 HC driving hours, 8x2 hour supervised blocks and another 16 weeks.

The ATA supports the driving experience and supervision pathways but recommends that the time based pathway be removed. There is no connection between the passage of time and driving skill.

The HR to MC progression should be retained. The other measures in this package would strengthen the risk controls associated with this progression.

Splitting MC into two classes

MC should be split into two classes, MC1 and MC2, to reflect the extra skills required to drive combinations such as triple road trains, quads and quins.

Drivers who already hold MC licences would be automatically designated as MC2.

Government support for driver training

More training support should be available for truck driver training, as well as train-the-trainer courses.

Truck driver medicals

Driver medicals should be part of the licensing process and be done before training gets underway.

Participants at the 2024 summit noted that it was disappointing, time consuming and costly for potential drivers to go through the training and licensing process only to discover during their employment induction that they did not meet the driver medical standards.