

27 April 2025

Ms Bianca D’Rosario
A/g Chief Executive Officer
Australian Trucking Association
25 National Circuit
Forrest, ACT 2603

Dear Ms D’Rosario,

Thank you for your recent correspondence conveying the Australian Trucking Association’s election platform to Labor.

We encourage the ATA to continue following Labor’s announcements for the remainder of the campaign.

Boosting truck safety

1. Will your party commit to resourcing the Australian Transport Safety Bureau to undertake no blame safety investigations into crashes involving trucks where there are lessons to be learned?

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent statutory agency, established by the Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003. In the course of its operations and in exercising its powers under this Act, the ATSB operates independently.

In 2023, the Government commissioned the Australian Transport Safety and Investigation Bodies Financial Sustainability Review (Skerritt Review) into the operations and sustainable funding for the ATSB and other safety agencies.

Our transport safety bodies are world-renowned, and the Government is committed to ensuring they stay operationally fit-for-purpose, sustainably funded and are well positioned to address current and future investigation requirements.

2. There are still an unacceptable number of deaths, injuries, and near hits occurring at Australian level crossings. Will your party work with the states to improve safety at level crossings that do not have boom gates or lights, including by requiring trains to have flashing beacons and side lights?

Heavy vehicle drivers are significantly over-represented in railway crossing incidents, including near misses, collisions and fatalities. Level crossings are made safer through investment in maintenance, safety upgrades and removals.

In 2024-25, the Albanese Government committed \$78.9 million for the Regional Level Crossing Upgrade Fund, and we continue to remove level crossings through infrastructure projects funded throughout the country.

The Albanese Labor Government is committed to working with the rail sector to ensure they play their part. In 2024, Transport Ministers around the country agreed to implement the Train Visibility at Level Crossing Code of Practice.

This first of its kind approach was supported by governments, industry and the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, and is expected to improve level crossing safety across the country.

3. The trucking industry needs new and upgraded truck rest areas to improve safety. This would also encourage more workers into the industry. Will your party commit to building new and upgraded truck rest areas under the Heavy Vehicle Rest Area initiative over five years rather than ten years?

The Heavy Vehicle Rest Area initiative provides \$140 million in Federal Government funding over 10 years for the construction of new and upgraded heavy vehicle rest areas.

Investments are made after a Steering Committee of truck drivers and industry representatives, including ATA representation, identifies projects that are essential for the safety of all road users.

The initiative has already seen 21 projects across the country funded in four tranches since it opened for applications in 2023.

Reducing the trucking industry's emissions

4. Electric truck models are an effective measure to begin reducing the greenhouse emissions from the trucking industry. Given the price gap between electric and conventional truck models, will your party set up a voucher scheme to cover half of the price gap between electric trucks and conventional trucks?

In November 2024, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency announced \$100 million to support the demonstration and deployment of heavy battery electric vehicles and charging solutions for heavy battery electric vehicles, as well as other innovations to support heavy electric truck uptake.

In addition, the Albanese Labor Government is developing a plan to reach net zero by 2050 (the Net Zero Plan). This includes developing six sectoral decarbonisation plans covering all major emitting sectors, including transport, which will be brought together with a whole of

economy strategy in the Net Zero Plan. The Government is considering the feedback received on the Transport and Infrastructure Net Zero Consultation Roadmap.

5. Renewable diesel can be used to effectively reduce emissions from the trucking industry. What incentives will you offer to produce enough renewable diesel domestically to meet 5 per cent of Australia's diesel needs before the end of the 2030s?

The Albanese Labor Government is committed to growing an Australian low carbon liquid fuels industry that will support our farmers and transport industries into the future while providing long term fuel security.

Renewable fuels have an essential role to play in hard to abate sectors like heavy haulage to reduce their emissions while creating new jobs and opportunities across the country.

That's why we've put \$250 million into our Aussie low carbon fuels industry, making good use of agricultural feedstocks, creating jobs and economic activity in the regions while driving down transport emissions, particularly for hard to abate aviation, heavy vehicle and maritime sectors. We're investing in the low carbon liquid fuels of the future that will reduce their environmental impact without preventing their operation or expansion.

6. Australian roads require significant upgrades to support high productivity vehicles, alternative fuel vehicles, flood proofing and to create alternate routes. Will you invest \$5 billion in targeted upgrades over the next ten years?

We are making significant investments in major road projects to support the movement of freight around Australia, making it safer for truck drivers and road users on those routes.

We are specifically investing in projects that will contribute to flood proofing our roads, including:

- \$580 million to improve flood resilience along Townson Road, Burdekin Road and Garfield Road West in Western Sydney
- \$376 million to improve flood immunity on the Bruce Highway south of Proserpine at the Goorganga Floodplain in Queensland
- \$269 million to improve flood immunity on the Bruce Highway at Tiaro in Queensland
- \$400 million for the new Richmond Bridge over the Hawkesbury River, which will be built to withstand a one in 20-year flood event
- \$50 million for flood mitigation on the Newell Highway between West Wyalong and Forbes in NSW
- \$48 million to improve flood immunity on the Bruce Highway at the Gairloch Floodway, north of Ingham in Queensland

Following the heavy flooding in North and Far North Queensland in January and February this year, the Albanese Government has invested a further \$70 million to seal and upgrade the remaining 10.8 kilometres of unsealed pavement on the Kennedy Developmental Road between The Lynd and Hughenden. This additional funding will ensure an alternative all

weather heavy vehicle freight route in North Queensland in the event of future flooding along the Bruce Highway through North Queensland.

7. Though it is essential that we monitor Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, mandatory climate reporting is a burden on medium and large trucking businesses. Will your party replace this mandatory reporting requirement with an ABS survey instead?

Climate reporting reforms aim to provide consistent requirements to improve transparency and understanding of material climate risks across the economy.

We've designed disclosure requirements to mitigate the risk that smaller entities are asked to provide information. They limit disclosure to material, reasonable and supportable information. Estimates rather than complete and precise Scope 3 calculations are acceptable.

In addition, to assist with the implementation of climate-related financial disclosures, including understanding the AASB standards, the Albanese Labor Government funded the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and financial reporting bodies to develop guidance to support legislative interpretations and undertake awareness activities to support uptake of the new standards.

Building our workforce

8. Truck driving is one of the top five occupations in Australia with a skill shortage. Truck driving is eligible to be a two-year apprenticeship, but apprentices do not receive any Government financial support. Will your party provide financial support to incentivise more truck driving apprentices, with apprentices to receive \$5000 in support, and employers to receive \$2000 after six months with a further \$3000 after twelve months?

Australian apprenticeships play a critical role in delivering a skilled workforce for the Australian economy and provide a pathway for many individuals to obtain skilled work, including in the transport industry.

The Albanese Government commissioned a strategic review of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System which was released earlier this year. The Review made recommendations on how to support high quality apprenticeships and ensure the incentives system is effective and responsive to the needs of the labour market, apprentices and employers.

As an initial response to the Review, the Australian Government is providing additional investment to extend current Australian Apprenticeship Incentives System settings, provide targeted cost of living support to apprentices and drive apprenticeship outcomes in high priority construction occupations.

The setting of priority occupations is a key consideration of the Government in its response to the Review. Close consultation with industry on the response is currently underway, to enable implementation of changes to the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System before the end of 2025.

9. Short training courses that provide skills to succeed in the industry that are run by state governments, trucking industry associations or major companies in conjunction with RTOs need further incentivising. Will you offer a completion bonus of \$1500 to drivers who complete these courses, with their first employer to receive a \$1500 hiring bonus?

The Albanese Government made a landmark \$30 billion National Skills Agreement (NSA) with all states and territories that commenced in January 2024.

Under the terms of the 5-year NSA the Commonwealth provides funding to state and territory government training systems so they can provide subsidised training across the many fields of vocational education, including transport.

Through Free TAFE the Albanese Government is also funding delivery of free training places in areas of high demand and skill need, which has included courses in driving and logistics.

A re-elected Labor government will continue to work with states and territories on identifying national priorities and to provide subsidised training and free TAFE to meet national and local skills demands.

10. Truck drivers need a better method of sharing evidence of their licenses and qualifications. To remedy this, will you launch a national skills passport?

The Australian Government has undertaken work and consulted with industry to scope a National Skills Passport.

11. To encourage increased migration of skilled workers to Australia, will you add articulated truck drivers and tanker drivers to the occupation list for skills-based migration?

The Albanese Government established Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) in 2022 as a central economic advisory body providing independent advice on current, emerging and future workforce skills, and training needs to improve employment opportunities and economic growth.

Inclusion on the Core Skills Occupation List is determined through independent analysis and consultation by JSA. There are no limits on how many occupations are allowed on the list.

Rather, the list is based on in-depth analysis of business activity, other economic data, input through submissions from industry and other stakeholders, and analysis of whether a migration pathway is appropriate to deal with the identified shortage by examining data such as how well migrants do in the labour market upon arrival.

Building better roads – and paying for them fairly

12. To boost the trucking industry's productivity and the resilience of the road network, will your party fund the following road projects?

- **New South Wales:** upgrade the Sheahan Bridge on the Hume Highway at Gundagai and extend parking bays to allow as of right access to the Hume Highway for 36.5 metre A-doubles

The New South Wales Government is currently investigating upgrade requirements and improvement options to allow Performance Based Standards (PBS) vehicles to use the Hume Highway corridor without restriction.

It is expected a preferred option will be identified for public display next year.

We welcome the final proposal from New South Wales for consideration in a future budget process once planning and costing work of the preferred option are complete.

We recognise the importance of the Hume Highway as an important freight route for NSW and the entire country. That is why we currently have more than \$200 million invested in projects delivering upgrades to the Hume.

We have also substantially increased and reindexed national highway maintenance funding after the Coalition froze it in 2014, robbing our national freight network of millions of dollars every year for a decade.

- **Victoria:** maintain the Australian Government's contribution to the non-tolled components of North East Link. The project will complete Melbourne's orbital system, improve access and reduce travel times.

The Albanese Labor Government remains committed to our \$5 billion investment in Melbourne's North East Link. This money is provisioned and budgeted with the project under construction with completion expected in 2028.

The Coalition has already announced they will be cutting infrastructure funding from Victoria, after they duded the state for over a decade.

- **Queensland:** upgrade the Inland Freight Route to establish an alternative to the Bruce Highway between Mungindi and Charters Towers.

The Albanese Labor Government is getting on with delivering our \$800 million investment in Queensland's Inland Freight Route with construction under way as of mid-2024. The project will provide an alternative to the Bruce Highway between Mungindi and Charters Towers and will be completed in 2033.

- **Queensland:** replace the westbound Bremer River Bridge on the Warrego Highway near Ipswich. The westbound bridge was built in 1958 and has cracks in its steel girders.

The Albanese Labor Government committed \$42.5 million to strengthen the Bremer River Bridge (Westbound) on the Warrego Highway in the 2024-25 Budget. The project is currently in planning, with design work underway, and construction is due to start in late 2025.

- **South Australia:** build the Greater Adelaide Bypass to a standard that would allow trucks to bypass the Adelaide Hills at the open road speed limit. The Australian Government should cover 80 per cent of the cost of the bypass.

The Albanese Labor Government has delivered \$525 million to deliver the Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass through the most recent federal budget.

As part of the state-wide High Productivity Vehicle Network, the project will deliver upgrades between the South Eastern Freeway and Sturt Highway, such as the duplication of the Swanport Bridge and Murray Bridge Township Bypass in Monarto.

The project will provide the necessary infrastructure to enable higher productivity vehicles to bypass Adelaide, resulting in fewer trips with reduced vehicle carbon emissions, increased freight efficiency and improved safety for all road users.

- **Western Australia:** upgrade the Great Eastern Highway from Perth to the Goldfields.

We are delivering more than \$230 million of upgrades to the Great Eastern Highway including between Walgoolan Southern Cross and Coates Gully, and between Coates Gully, Walgoolan to Southern Cross and Ghooli to Benari.

We have also substantially increased and reindexed national highway maintenance funding after the Coalition froze it in 2014, robbing our national freight network of millions of dollars every year for a decade.

- **Tasmania:** complete the duplication of the Bass Highway between Launceston and Devonport.

We are delivering more than \$330 million of upgrades on the Bass Highway, including upgrades between Cooee and Wynyard, Wynyard and Marrawah, Deloraine and Devonport, and \$192 million of safety works as part of the Northern Roads Package - Stage 2.

- **Northern Territory:** comprehensively address the flood immunity of the Stuart Highway. The Stuart Highway is an essential link between the Northern Territory and southern Australia; flooding results in food shortages across the territory.

We are delivering more than \$290 million of upgrades on the Stuart Highway, recognising its importance as a key freight route in the Northern Territory.

13. Will your party develop minimum national service and maintenance standards for the National Land Transport Network and reallocate funding to ensure these critical freight roads are maintained properly?

The Coalition froze the indexation of road maintenance funding for ten years, depriving states of states of vital resources to repair and maintain national highways.

We have increased the Commonwealth's annual commitment to road maintenance funding from \$350 million to \$460 million and reinstated indexation.

14. Following the High Court's decision in *Vanderstock*, will your party develop a distance based road user charging system for electric vehicles, to come into force once electric vehicles make up 30 per cent of new vehicle sales?

The Albanese Government remains committed to overseeing an increasing uptake of a more fuel efficient and zero emissions vehicle fleet, but will also be examining how these new vehicles can contribute to road funding.

Gross fuel excise receipts have experienced a small but steady increase since 2014-15, but as a proportion of total government revenue they have been in decline for the last 40 years.

Timeframes for any future decline in fuel excise are uncertain and are dependent on a number of factors. The Australian Government, states and territories are working together on long term options for zero emission vehicles user charging.

Thank you once again for talking the time to write to Labor outlining the Australian Trucking Association's election priorities.

Yours sincerely,

ALP Campaign 2025