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**Contents**

1. Introduction 3

2. Australian Trucking Association 3

3. Recommendations 3

4. Issues 4

4.1. High productivity trials on the Hume Highway 4

4.2. Private provision of road infrastructure 5

4.3. Funding allocated for heavy vehicle safety programs 5

4.4. National consistency 5

# Introduction

The NSW Draft Master Plan (chapter 7) effectively recognises the constraints the heavy vehicle industry is operating under in NSW. It observes that if radical action is not taken to increase the productivity capacity of the heavy vehicle industry in NSW the effect will be detrimental to the economy.

The actions highlighted in the Draft Master Plan present major programs that aim to increase the efficiency of freight movements in NSW. Whilst the majority of the actions identified will have a positive effect on increasing productivity, there are concerns over some of the propositions.

# Australian Trucking Association

The Australian Trucking Association (ATA) is the peak body that represents the trucking industry. Its members include state and sector based trucking associations, some of the nation’s largest transport companies, and businesses with leading expertise in truck technology.

# Recommendations

Recommendation 1

ATA recommends the trial of high productivity vehicles on the Hume Highway, but without additional direct payments for access.

Recommendation 2

ATA recommends the payment for high productivity vehicle standard rest areas and change over bays be paid for by the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program (HVSPP), not trial users of the Hume Highway project.

Recommendation 3

ATA recommends funding from the HVSPP be used to increase the stacking distance at the Hillston level crossing.

Recommendation 4

ATA recommends that private provision of infrastructure should be provided only on the grounds of improving efficient provision of roads, not simply because Transport for NSW believes industry can pay.

Recommendation 5

ATA recommends funding given to improve heavy vehicle safety should be allocated to projects with tangible results, such as TruckSafe.

Recommendation 6

ATA recommends Transport NSW continues to be involved with national issues for the heavy vehicle industry such as NHVR and HVCI. However, they need to act in the interest of the NSW community, including the business community that generates wealth.

# Issues

* 1. High productivity trials on the Hume Highway

It is imperative high productivity vehicle use is supported in Australia, where they are suitable, in order to meet the increasing freight demand. The ATA embraces the use of B-triples on the Hume Highway. We are not convinced a trial is essential, but support an open trial occurring. The route from Sydney to Melbourne is a key freight route and providing more appropriate rest areas and changeover areas shows future proofing the Hume highway. However, the additional direct charge that the project proposes ignores the access charges and safety based infrastructure payments these heavy vehicle combinations currently pay under the PayGo charging model. Double charging high productivity vehicles is unnecessary and would restrict smaller operators who would like to use B-triples from participating in the trial.

How the scheme can also make the rest areas/changeover bays exclusive to HPV’s is unclear, as it is a community benefit that should therefore be paid for by both the community and heavy vehicles generally or through the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program (HVSPP). This is a safety fund specifically aimed at financing rest areas, changeover bays and other safety and productivity initiatives.

High productivity vehicles will reduce the number of heavy vehicles necessary to complete the freight task, and therefore the incidence of accidents. They should not be penalised for increasing safety on roads they operate on by being required to pay additional payments above PayGo.

ATA has lodged an access request to allow modular (42.5m) AB triples on a route from the Victorian border to Queensland via the Hay and Hillston. This route plus the access given modular B-triples in road train areas allows three B-doubles of goods to be moved by two prime movers (i.e. 3 B-doubles = 1 B-triple + 1 AB triple) in through NSW - a 33.3 percent gain in productivity. In order for this to occur, the level crossing at Hillston needs its vehicle stacking distance increased by about 5m. This requires a realignment of the Kidman Way (Griffith road) junction with McKenzie road. This should also be funded by a HVSPP grant, as the benefits accrue to the whole economy.

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* 1. Private provision of road infrastructure

The resources sector has profits well into the billions annually; to compare this to the heavy vehicle industry misunderstands the financial constraints the trucking industry operates under. The justification for private provision in the report states freight movements are ‘essentially a private sector undertaking’. All journeys on any road are based on private sector outcomes such as generating income in response to community demand for freight. Simply because these operations are based on business and not public sector movements, this is not a valid argument for why private provision of infrastructure should apply to the heavy vehicle industry. A stronger argument for why private provision may be necessary would be to improve efficiency in infrastructure allocation, not because industry has the theoretical ability to pay. This is absurd, as service industry operators simply pass on the costs to the community.

Providing certainty to industry should be a pre-requisite to any private investment. However, until there are legal penalties for firms that fail to produce budgeted suitable provision, industry is wary of simply handing over a complex role to private entities who have to factor in financial risk setting premiums, which government does not.

Industry cannot be assured that the same failings in road provision will not continue or become worse under private partnerships.

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ATA recommends that private provision of infrastructure should be provided only on the grounds of improving efficient provision of roads, not simply because Transport for NSW believes industry can pay.

* 1. Funding allocated for heavy vehicle safety programs

The funding allocated to investigating ‘five star trucking’ is questionable, given there are already ways industry and customers recognise companies that produce safe practices above what is required, such as TruckSafe - a program with proven safety results, showing its members to be twice as safe as non-members.[[1]](#footnote-1)

‘Five star trucking’ remains an intangible proposal, as its characteristics have not been explained and safety rating systems have not worked well in overseas examples.

The ATA does not support ‘Five star trucking’, as it is viewed by industry to be duplicating successful heavy vehicle safety programs that already exist such as, TruckSafe.

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ATA recommends funding given to improve heavy vehicle safety should be allocated to projects with tangible results, such as TruckSafe.

* 1. National consistency

It is important that NSW continues to play a role in national issues for the heavy vehicle industry, including the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, current national charges and the Heavy Vehicle Charging and Investment reform plan. However, states should be able to compete competitively on a national level, and providing good foundations for investment and business in NSW should be a priority for NSW.

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ATA recommends Transport NSW continues to be involved with national issues for the heavy vehicle industry such as NHVR and HVCI. However, they need to act in the interest of the NSW community, including the business community that generates wealth.

1. <http://www.trucksafe.com.au/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)