

TRUCKING AUSTRALIA

2020 SPECIAL REPORT



THE AUSTRALIAN
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ARRIVE ALIVE

Slow down, and allow time to rest and assess progress {P2}



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New 'smart caps' to improve health and safety {P6}

'Unprecedented' grocery splurge pushed our truckers to the limit

Supermarket shelves were emptied by panic buying, not because of any weakness in the supply chain

ROSANNE BARRETT



Australia's "unplanned and unprecedented" grocery splurge has challenged the nation's domestic supply chain, as trucking companies exceed 100 per cent capacity to deliver supermarket goods.

Truck operators have bought additional trailers, hired drivers, and are driving direct from interstate warehouses to supermarkets to cope with the COVID-19-inspired panic-buying that has fuelled more than double the usual grocery sales in recent weeks.

Australian Logistics Council chief executive Kirk Coningham says major logistics operators Toll and Linfox reported deliveries exceeding those in the lead-up to Christmas to the major retailers.

"It is both unplanned and unprecedented," Coningham says.

"There has been an enormous burden on the supply chain through the supermarket, spurred by panic buying.

"Normally the industry is very good at ramp-up because we know when our peak periods are, but this has taken the industry by surprise. So there has been a huge ramp-up across the board to get the groceries on the shelves as required."

Coningham calls for understanding and appreciation for truck drivers working to bring supplies to consumers.

He says the Australian Government convened a supermarket crisis team to implement planning for the rush, involving the logistics and trucking industry.

"While people are confronted with empty shelves in a supermarket, that sort of underlying panic exists," he says.

"The only reason that there is a problem now is because of panic buying, not because of inability for Australia's supply chain to meet it. This demand is just off the charts."

Glen Cameron Group chief

executive Nick Capp says the COVID-19 impacts are unprecedented. The company is heavily involved in all elements of the food supply chain.

"They have hired trailers, drivers and trucks, 'wherever we can find them'."

"A lot of the supply chain we work for have significant interconnections and they're all seeing this huge surge of volume at the same time," he says.

"We're just trying to find solutions: pop-up warehouses, moving equipment interstate and delivering across states for what is meant to be metro deliveries — that is the norm at the moment."

"It's everywhere at the same time."

Capp says industry players are helping each other to provide fleet and equipment. He also says they are highly mindful of the health of their workers, as they are critical to the effective functioning in the supply chain.

"We can't go into the cloud, we move physical items," he says.

"We're spending a lot of time working on scenario planning to adapt supply chains to the changing environment."

The freight burden has been enormous.

Woolworths supermarkets managing director Claire Peters pointed to a seven-day toilet paper sales record exceeding average sales over seven weeks.

One trucking operator reported their fleet of B-double deliveries from a paper-products manufacturer went from the standard eight each week, to more than 40.

The Commonwealth Bank's chief economist Craig James says ABS retail figures for February — before the peak buying frenzy — showed a 0.4 per cent increase in retail sales dominated by groceries.

"While Aussies have been spending up on grocery-type items, boosting home inventories, there may not necessarily be a drop-off in food spending during April and May," he says.

"It is likely that Aussies will maintain higher home inventories for an extended period."

Emergency measures have been implemented to ensure supply is maintained.



The impressive Lights on the Hill convoy of trucks heads to the annual trucking memorial service in Gatton, Queensland, last September

'While Aussies have been spending up on grocery-type items, boosting home inventories, there may not necessarily be a drop-off in food spending during April and May'

CRAIG JAMES
COMMONWEALTH BANK
CHIEF ECONOMIST

Although it varies across local governments, many councils lifted curfew restrictions for trucks in residential areas to allow restocking.

Last week the Queensland government passed laws requiring all councils to allow around-the-clock operations. South Australia, Victoria and NSW followed.

Before COVID-19 wreaked havoc on Australian provisions, prevention measures were impacting international supply chains for retail and industrial goods. For about five weeks from late January — when Chinese

ports were closed due to their original outbreak — freight movement carrying imports dropped up to 60 per cent. Imports fell about 20 per cent.

Queensland Trucking Association chief executive Gary Mahon says traffic through the ports has "taken a hit".

"There are parts of the industry that have been substantially impacted, those who are really heavily reliant on ports," he says.

"We're hearing the factories are gearing up quite promptly, and that's a good sign for both imports and exports. Export freight has

been held in the absence of ships."

He labels the two experiences disproportionate. "We've got elements of the industry full-on and other parts of the industry that are quiet."

National trade lead at PwC Australia Gary Dutton says the abrupt disruptions highlight the vulnerabilities in supply chains, including over-reliance on single sources of supply, just-in-time deliveries and low country-of-origin visibility.

Up to 80 per cent of supply for major companies would originate from China, from finished goods

to raw materials or intermediate parts.

"The impact of that is significant," he says. "Those that trade internationally just trying to get their heads around the rapidly changing situation, the uncertainty of goods availability, and in the reactive-order ordering that comes out of that."

He points to the 420,000 international air flights cancelled to June, saying that shutdown will create a major impact on freight distribution.

"It all adds complexity, adds time, and adds cost," Dutton says.

Freight services essential industries

ROSANNE BARRETT

Trucking and freight companies have urged the Australian Government to maintain freight and logistics services as essential industries as strict coronavirus-suppression measures come into effect.

Drivers are being forced to remain in their cabins for freight handovers under protective-health measures, as they continue to transport goods and materials across now-closed interstate borders.

Australian Logistics Council chief executive officer Kirk Coningham says all freight deliveries are continuing and, at this stage, there is no preferencing of grocery or medical supplies.

"There have been no signals that anything stops in terms of freight and no chance for it to be selective on which freight is to be delivered," he says. "If they shut interstate freight, we would have a bigger issue. That might be something they look at in a few weeks as it continues to escalate, but I think for now you want to keep that flowing."

From midnight last Wednesday, Queensland's borders were closed. The Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia had already closed interstate movement.

Industry bodies have been in discussions with federal, state and territory governments to fight for logistics and freight continuity, as well as the services to back them up.

"Our supply chains cannot afford to have freight vehicles delayed at border check points for hours if we want to keep essential goods flowing," Coningham says. "Industry appreciates the need to protect the health and welfare of all communities. However, achieving that rests in part on being able to keep food, clothing and medicines moving to the places they need to go."

Many operators have introduced additional social distancing regulations, and some have scrapped the requirement for people accepting deliveries to sign for them.

The Australian Trucking Association chair, Geoff Crouch, says services stations, roadhouses, vehicle servicing, freight and delivery, and home deliveries must be considered essential.

"The last few weeks have reminded every single Australian of the importance of our truck drivers, supported by schedulers, loaders, forklifts, logistics managers, service technicians and all the other people who make up our industry," he says.

Earlier last week, the ATA welcomed the Australian Government's \$188 billion assistance package, including the expanded JobSeeker Payments. They said under the previous assistance measures, the nation's 28,900 owner-drivers were ineligible.

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Slow down, allow time to rest and assess

FRED PAWLE



The people charged with delivering a new set of national laws for the transport industry are practising what they hope to preach when they finally reach Canberra later this year: don't drive too fast, and allow time to rest and assess progress.

The National Transport Commission is now 12 months into a thorough and potentially historic review (or Regulation Impact Statement) of the laws regarding trucks on our roads and highways, and progress is steady.

"It's unwise to think you could knock this over in 12 months," says former Productivity Commission boss Peter Harris, who is now chairing the expert panel overseeing the review.

"You've got to be sure the costs are offset by benefits."

But if Harris sounds sensible about the time frame, he is bold about what should be delivered. This truck might be sticking cautiously to the speed limit but its load will, he hopes, challenge conventions when it is delivered.

"There is no point in doing this if you're going to be timid," he says.

There are two key issues under consideration. First, how to streamline access to roads in towns and cities, which are mostly administered by councils, and are sometimes a bureaucratic nightmare for drivers and operators. Second is driver fatigue, which is currently managed using outdated and sometimes ineffective methods.

And from a national perspective, the two biggest obstacles are Western Australia and the North-



EVAN MORGAN

Small owner-operators cannot be expected to conform to systems that could only apply to big companies, says NTC expert panel chair Peter Harris, inset

ern Territory, which opted out of the most recent attempts to standardise Australia's transport laws, in 2018, and are still equivocating about joining this new proposal for a national framework.

The 2018 laws introduced a long-overdue reform to attribute responsibility for drivers who feel pressured to break the law. The Chain of Responsibility concept explicitly identifies every person involved in the scheduling, loading and unloading of trucks (in-

cluding company directors) and makes them complicit in the event of a driver feeling compelled to break the speed limit or ignore a compulsory rest stop.

The CoR regulations are enforced by the National Heavy Vehicle Register in Brisbane. It has its own officers in some states and works with police in others to check drivers' log books to ensure compliance with fatigue regulations (no more than 12-14 hours driving in a day, rests of 15 minutes

every five hours). But it also learns of breaches through its confidential hotline, to which drivers can call to report incidents when they have been delayed or surreptitiously urged to step on it.

The hotline receives 100 to 150 calls a month. Officers respond by visiting the company concerned and checking whether it has the right systems in place. It is currently investigating about 14 cases. If a penalty ensues, it is usually a fine, although the NHVR's first

prosecution, of a Victorian company and involving multiple drivers, is now before the courts.

A large part of the NHVR's job has been changing the culture of the industry.

"The industry is changing rapidly," says Joe Fitzgerald, the NHVR's corporate affairs executive director. "Businesses have had to change the way they look at safety. By and large the reception has been positive. Previously, drivers felt disproportionately target-

ed. Now we are ensuring there is much more transparency from a corporate social responsibility perspective."

Effective though the CoR regulations are, there is still a long way to go, as the NTC's Regulation Impact Statement is bound to show.

Log books, which are compulsory for every heavy vehicle driver in the country, are not only cumbersome, they can be ineffective. For example, just because a driver doctors his log book does not

necessarily mean he is fatigued; similarly, diligent logbook management cannot guarantee a driver won't nod off at the wheel.

"What we've effectively got is a proxy for fatigue," says the NTC's Paul Davies, who is running the review. "They (log books) record contributing factors. But the evidence isn't great that they are an excellent predictor of fatigue."

New technology exists that more accurately assesses a driver's fatigue. Trucker-style caps that monitor brain activity and cameras that count the number of times the driver blinks or is distracted are just two examples. Both of these methods can alert the driver as well as his head office whenever safety is being compromised. Clearly a log book can't do this.

Any reform in this area will, however, need to take into account a wide variety of operators. Large transport companies have legal departments and compliance systems in place.

Small owner-operators should not be expected to conform to systems that could only apply to big companies, Harris says.

"We'd like as much simplicity and comprehension for the small operator as much as for the largest," he says. "You don't want laws that just apply to one group."

The other issue is access to roads. Highways and freeways are mostly a given, but once a driver leaves these, problems and bureaucratic obstacles arise. Permission from local authorities — in most cases councils — is often complicated and slow.

"The first and last miles are the biggest challenge," says the NTC's Davies. "The assessment by the road manager is not always an easy one."

The balance that needs to be struck is between efficiency for the transport operators and the safety and maintenance of roads.

"You need to have some level of assessment," Davies concedes.

"You can't simply say any truck can go down any street."

To receive these assessments, operators need to deal with a wide variety of councils all over the country, some of which have few freight depots in their jurisdiction and are not as adept as others in dealing with requests.

In most cases the operator making the request is not a ratepayer, which can restrict the council's enthusiasm to co-operate, although Davies says the councils mostly do a good job.

"Each council faces its own challenges in making access decisions and some perform better than others. We're keen for the future law to take pressure off councils and industry," he says.

One of the solutions Davies is hoping will be adopted is a system of precedence: if a truck has been allowed along a particular road, then a subsequent application from a similar or smaller truck should be quickly approved.

But even this is not as simple as it sounds. Different weather conditions or an intervening flooding of the road can mean that the precedent is not identical.

The NTC's Regulation Impact Statement will be released soon, after which further consultation with the industry and government will be made.

"That's when the rubber will hit the road," Harris says. "We should be encouraging the Northern Territory and Western Australia to join (national laws)."

"The best outcome will be consistency between the states. Then you'd like consistency in enforcement, that's a piece of work in its own right."

Asked if the industry was supporting the review, Harris says it is, but cautiously.

"We know we can do so much better, and there are elements under consideration. There are plenty of ways to improve the management of this industry."

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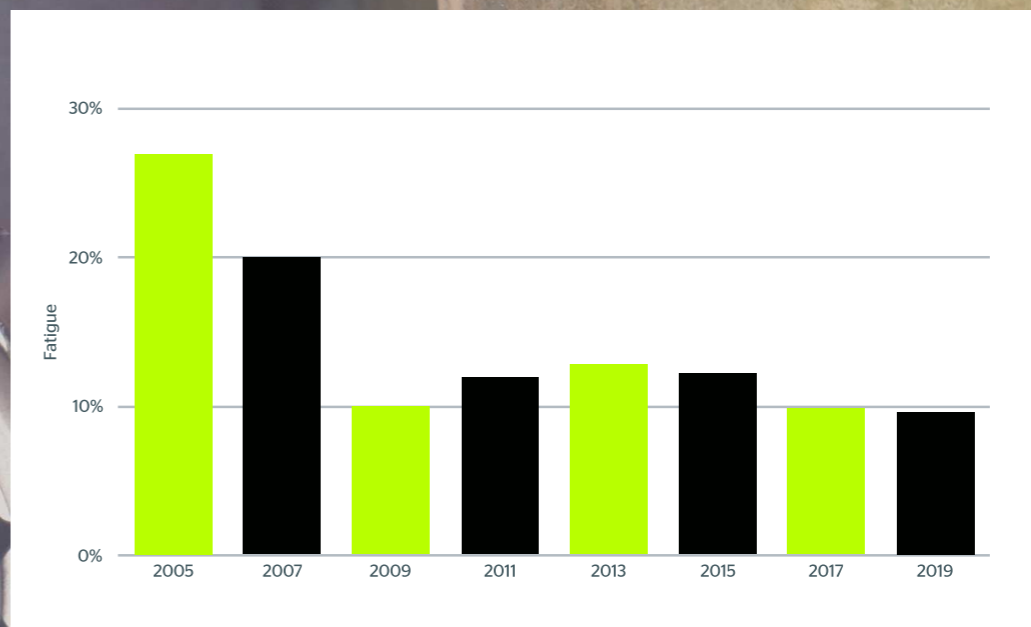
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COVID19 has created logistical challenges across Australia with the transport industry busier than ever keeping our supermarket shelves stocked and delivering essential supplies to our towns and cities. Driver fatigue is a major concern, one worth highlighting as a precautionary measure over the coming months.

Australia's No. 1 truck insurer, NTI, and its National Truck Accident Research Centre (NTARC) have been reporting on truck safety data since 2002 with the goal of moving Australian industry towards a safer and more sustainable future. NTI congratulates the industry on continued positive steps to achieve this outcome.

NTARC is soon to release the NTI 2020 Major Accident Investigation report. Visit www.nti.com.au for more information.

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Red tape hinders potential to generate more productive fleets

ROSANNE BARRETT

Red tape across overlapping bureaucracies is hindering the introduction of safer and more efficient trucks, as regulations add up to \$1.8bn in additional costs across the industry.

The take-up of performance-based standards (PBS) vehicles, which are optimised and often customised heavy trucks, can require more than 60 days in permit-processing time and uncertainty across multiple governments and road managers.

While national authorities readily acknowledge the benefits of the contemporary trucks — including involvement in 46 per cent fewer road crashes and 24 per cent higher productivity than the conventional fleet — some have raised concerns over increased lengths and weight.

Deloitte Access Economics director Eamon McGinn says Australia is at the forefront of PBS vehicles internationally but different state regulations make their rollout complex.

“The NHVR (National Heavy Vehicle Regulator) is helping to fix this but really hasn’t yet delivered on the expected benefits,” he says, noting there could be improvement in the coming years.

PBS vehicles can be larger and must comply with more complex rules around road safety, engineering and use.

Approvals for the vehicles facilitated through the NHVR have improved significantly in recent years, from more than 31 days to just under 19 days, but states and councils remain slow.

NHVR data shows state and local road managers can add more than 60 days in processing time for the vehicles.

McGinn tells The Australian state governments are attuned to community concerns about larger vehicles and potentially greater road damage but there is a compromise solution.

“Possibly the best way to deal with these concerns is to be careful in expanding access for high-performance vehicles — keep them restricted to specific routes that the State Government can closely monitor and where motorists will feel most comfortable dealing with them such as motorways,” he says.

Australian Trucking Association chief-of-staff Bill McKinley calls on governments to commit to an effective reform and incentive program in order to achieve the potential economic gains of a more productive fleet.

“In that high-productivity space we do get a lot of efficiency gains and effective reductions in emissions,” he says.

As the author of the Deloitte



Australia Post has more than 600 eDVs (electric three-wheel trailers) on the roads for inner-city deliveries

Access Economics’ Economic Benefits of Improved Regulation in the Australian Trucking Industry report, McGinn found potential savings to end consumers of up to \$352m a year by 2049, if regulatory efficiencies are passed on in full.

“Our estimates indicate that addressing challenges in the use of modern, larger articulated vehicles and therefore, increasing the contribution of these vehicles to meeting Australia’s freight task, has the potential to generate significant benefits for Australia’s economy,” his report says.

“While the level of cost savings for the trucking industry itself from increasing heavy vehicle access are substantial, pursuing reform to the trucking industry is

made even more important due to trucking’s extensive role as an input into all other industries in the Australian economy.”

This includes 5.1 per cent of the cost of textiles, 4.4 per cent of the cost of beer, and 4.1 per cent of the cost of fruit and vegetables.

The main saving is in the use of more efficient trucks.

“More productive trucks are able to carry more cargo per journey as they are both larger and better designed to carry heavier loads while maintaining safety, movement and road wear performance,” the report says. “While these trucks cost more to operate in total, they actually result in lower cost per tonne of freight.”

“This means that the overall freight task can be completed at a

‘Potential savings to end consumers of up to \$352m a year by 2049, (could be found) if regulatory efficiencies are passed on in full’

EAMON MCGINN
DELOITTE ACCESS ECONOMICS
DIRECTOR

lower cost when more productive vehicles are used.”

Australia’s fleet is also ageing. Increasing the PBS vehicles across the Australian fleet would also reduce its median age—a key driver of improved efficiency and safety across the industry.

An NHVR and Australian

Road Transport Suppliers Association joint report this year found the median age of the PBS fleet was four years, compared to a heavy prime mover at 10.9 years, heavy trailer at 12.2 years and heavy rigids at 13.7 years.

“Newer equipment has the benefit of modern safety systems including better braking, stability control and many other features now common on new heavy vehicles,” the Performance Based Standards Australia’s PBS Fleet report said. “It is one of the significant benefits that PBS delivers as it accelerates the renewal of the heavy vehicle fleet.”

Only from 2015 were trucks required to have anti-lock brakes and trailers.

This month the Australian

Trucking Association called on the Australian Government to provide an investment allowance for new and late-model second-hand trucks and trailers, aimed at modernising the fleet.

Some efforts are also being made for emissions reductions across the fleet. Australia Post trialled the electric light truck, the Fuso eCarter, in Sydney’s central business district last year.

“While it did not become a permanent part of our fleet we continue to explore low-emission options,” a spokesman says.

The postal service also has more than 600 eDVs — electric three-wheel trailers — on the roads for inner-city deliveries after a safety issue led to their recall last year.

Key changes essential to keep on delivering

GEOFF CROUCH



The trucking industry keeps Australia moving.

Everything on the supermarket shelves, the fuel in our petrol stations and all the medicine in our hospitals and pharmacies are delivered by trucks. Every person in the community relies on trucks to get their goods. They don’t get to your supermarket by rail or by sea.

The past few weeks have reminded every Australian of this.

Our truck drivers carry daily life in our country, but they don’t do it alone. They are supported by the schedulers, loaders, forkies, logistics managers, mechanics and all the other people who make up our industry, including repairers and production facilities.

Our vital role is a key point that the Australian Trucking Association is making to governments. Together with our member associations, we collectively represent the businesses and people of the Australian trucking industry. We are committed to safety, professionalism and viability.

Drawing on models followed overseas, we are arguing that governments should consider the following to be essential, whatever level of shutdown is imposed:

- Service stations and roadhouses, including driver access to toilets and showers
- Truck, trailer and logistics equipment production and sales
- Truck, trailer and logistics equipment repair and related operations, including emergency breakdown support
- Freight and logistics, including postal services and post office boxes home delivery services.

We are arguing that governments shouldn’t try to distinguish between essential and non-essential freight. This distinction is already causing problems in New Zealand. For example, non-essential freight needs to be moved out of the ports so essential freight to come in.

Although businesses in the grocery and fuel supply chains have been busier than ever, other trucking businesses are facing a dramatic reduction in work. The ATA has worked closely with our member associations to argue for government support for these businesses.

A key feature of our industry is it is an industry of small businesses. 97 per cent of Australia’s 53,200 trucking businesses have fewer than 20 employees. Of these, 28,900 are owner drivers, who do not employ staff at all.

We have secured important support for these businesses.

Eligible truck owner drivers can apply for an expanded JobSeeker Payment with a new coronavirus supplement.

Small and medium-sized trucking businesses that employ staff will be eligible for a cashflow boost of up to \$100,000 with a minimum payment of \$20,000.

The ATA has welcomed the government’s support for business investment, which comprises:

- A government guarantee for small and medium business loans. The loans will be interest-free for six months and will be for a maximum of \$250,000 over three years. The government will guarantee 50 per cent of each loan
- An increase in the instant asset write-off threshold from \$50,000 to \$150,000, with access expanded to include businesses with a turnover of less than \$500 million. The increased threshold will be available till June 30, 2020
- An additional 50 per cent investment allowance for eligible assets, including new trucks and trailers. This allowance will be available till June 30, 2021.

These measures will enable trucking businesses to lift their investment in trucks and trailers, including trucks and trailers made by Australians in Australia.

The new trucks and trailers bought as a result of these incentives will be safer than the ones they replace. They will be fitted with better safety equipment, including the mandatory features we have campaigned for many years: front underrun protection, anti-lock brakes and mandatory electronic brakes.

In addition to advocating for our members, the ATA is providing government decision-makers with accurate and timely information about the impact of the pandemic.

Using our extensive network of members, followers and contacts, we are briefing ministers, public-service executives and regulators on issues ranging from container volumes to restrictions on emergency breakdown operators. The message is getting through. We are getting results.

We also see our role as providing authoritative information, at a time when there is so much chatter and much of it is wrong. The coronavirus information on the ATA website — truck.net.au/coronavirus — is easy to follow, clear and accurate.

In the months to come, the ATA and our member associations will continue working together to represent the industry.

By working together with confidence and unity, we will be able to keep up the flow of essential food, groceries and medical supplies as the pandemic worsens and more restrictions are imposed. Because the pandemic will end. And the trucking industry will keep delivering until it is over, and beyond.

Geoff Crouch is chair of the Australian Trucking Association.

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Queensland Government

Maintenance critical to ensure roads support future traffic volumes

ROSANNE BARRETT

It was a project three decades in the making that is now improving freight lines and reuniting Toowoomba's city heart.

Southern Queensland's much anticipated \$1.6 billion Toowoomba Bypass opened in September, allowing trucks to avoid the "Garden City's" main street and progress interstate freight more quickly.

Since the Australian government's single biggest investment in a road project opened to traffic, an Infrastructure Department spokesman says about 80 per cent of the 4400 trucks that traverse the region use the 41-km bypass.

The previous main route bisected the city.

"The Toowoomba Bypass is driving freight efficiencies and returning local streets to communities by taking heavy vehicle traffic around north of Toowoomba instead of through it," he says.

"The Toowoomba region is a key link in the national freight network, with almost half of all exports from the Port of Brisbane originating from regions accessed via the existing Warrego Highway Toowoomba Range section."

Queensland roads are a national focus of funding and planning, given the state's decentralised nature, its propensity to natural disasters, and significant agricultural, mineral and energy resources.

Five stages of the Bruce Highway were added to Infrastructure Australia's Priority List this year, as well as a backlog of road-maintenance projects totalling an expected \$4bn.

Deloitte Access Economics director Eamon McGinn says Queensland major roads have different stressors on them than other states.

He says the road build needs to be more resilient, both to allow heavy-freight capacity and for natural disasters.

"The growing use of A-doubles in Queensland, particularly for agricultural commodities, means that there will naturally be benefits from enhancing roads to better accommodate A-doubles," McGinn says. "This will provide increased

'It might not be sexy and might not have a ribbon-cutting attached, but road maintenance is absolutely critical to our nation's future'

PETER COLACINO
INFRASTRUCTURE AUSTRALIA'S
CHIEF OF POLICY AND RESEARCH

capacity and (help) other motorists feel comfortable with their presence.

"Queensland is more exposed to cyclones than many other parts of Australia and this has implica-

tions both for the build quality required in some Queensland projects as well as the need for redundancy so that we minimise the potential for communities to be cut off from supply chains when a single piece of road or rail is damaged in a natural disaster."

This has all added to the road-maintenance task, which, in Queensland, is a multibillion-dollar build-up.

Infrastructure Australia's Chief of Policy and Research, Peter Colacino, says there needs to be a stronger focus on road maintenance to ensure transport costs are minimised.

He says the low-quality roads currently add \$118m to transport costs but that will grow 30 per cent if no action is taken.

"It might not be sexy and might not have a ribbon-cutting attached, but road maintenance is absolutely critical to our nation's future," he says.

An Infrastructure Department spokesman says the Australian Government has committed \$10bn to the Bruce Highway upgrades through to 2028. The Queensland Government is also contributing on an 80/20 funding split.

"This program is the largest road infrastructure program Queensland has ever seen and is improving safety, flood resilience and capacity along the highway between Brisbane and Cairns," he says.

This includes the Sunshine Coast's \$1bn Cooroy to Curra up-

grade, the \$662.5m Caboolture-Bribie Island Road to Steve Irwin Way project, the \$301m Maroochydoore and Mons Road interchanges, the \$481m Cairns Southern Access Corridor, and the \$163.3m Deception Bay Road interchange.

"These projects have been identified as sections of the Bruce Highway that have capacity constraints, poor safety records and don't appropriately support accessibility for local communities, tourist and freight traffic," the spokesman says.

"It is vital that these projects are delivered to address these issues and improve the standard of the road network to ensure the Bruce Highway can support current and future traffic volumes."

Queensland's Townsville Port also started its \$193m upgrade this month to allow bigger ships to access the growing industry and minerals province of Northern Australia.

General manager, Infrastructure and Environment, Marissa Wise says the channel deepening will allow larger cargo ships to dock, making the journey more efficient than the current situation where they travel to Brisbane and the materials have to be trucked in.

"There are great advantages for the Townsville Port and for the trucking industry to be able to do that," she says.

"We will certainly have more local trucking, and not so much up the Bruce Highway, which is good for everybody."



Working together will help to fight against virus

CAMERON DICK



Queensland's manufacturing sector is agile, innovative and customer-focused, it has a strong regional base, is a major employer, and it contributes about \$20bn to our economy each year.

Manufacturing is a vital pillar of our state, and it's arguably never been more important than now as we face our greatest challenge since wartime: the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The Queensland Government is rigorously monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak, which will have a wide range of direct and indirect implications to industry, our workforce, and our communities — changing how we live, work, move and interact.

That's why government and industry must work together to think about how Queensland manufacturers can adapt and contribute to the fight against coronavirus.

Together we need to ensure local businesses continue and are well positioned to supply goods and services to customers. Queensland's truck drivers, manufacturers and food processors are vital in keeping supplies flowing.

Recently we passed urgent reforms to ensure more products can get on our shelves faster and supermarkets stay well stocked. The amendments have lifted operating restrictions for supermarket loading docks and distribution centres, so delivery trucks can restock around the clock.

We've asked Queensland manufacturers, suppliers and producers to identify other supply-chain issues we need to address, to help keep production lines flowing and to protect local jobs.

We're also working to identify businesses that can switch from their usual production lines to manufacture products to aid in the prevention and containment of the virus, and already we've had success with distilleries including Bundaberg Rum and Beenleigh Rum both starting production on ethanol for hand sanitiser.

The Queensland Government



CHRIS MCKENDRY

An army operative test drives a Rheinmetall Boxer CRV at Puckapunyal in Victoria

has announced a \$4bn relief package for Queenslanders in response to coronavirus, with \$2.5bn allocated to support workers and businesses.

This includes a job support loan package, interest-free loans for the first 12 months, payroll tax deferral and rent and bill relief, and is in addition to a \$27.25m initial coronavirus recovery package announced in February.

We have a strong plan in place to keep manufacturers in business, protect jobs, and to keep the wheels of industry turning during this turbulent time.

Queensland's 10-Year Advanced Manufacturing Roadmap and Action Plan provides us with a clear pathway for the future of our manufacturing industry.

The road map supports the take-up of new technologies to create innovative businesses in the digital economy and advanced manufacturing.

We are seeing this happening already in the heavy-vehicle sector, which the Queensland Government recognises to be vital to the state, and we're proud to be Australia's largest manufacturer of heavy vehicles and equipment.

Our heavy-vehicle manufacturing precinct, located in the corridor between Ipswich and Brisbane, currently manufactures heavy vehicles for commercial, mining and defence customers.

Volvo Group has operated its Wacol-based heavy-vehicle manufacturing operations there

for more than 45 years and has become Australia's largest vehicle-manufacturing powerhouse, with its engineers using cutting-edge technologies to design and test trucks tailored for our unique conditions.

Haulmark Trailers in Rocklea, meanwhile, builds trailers for mining, construction and livestock transportation; Holmwood Highgate in Loganholme manufactures tankers for petroleum, bitumen and chemical transportation; and Redcat Industries in Eagle Farm is a leading manufacturer of safety components for wheels used by fleets worldwide.

The sector is exploring new technologies such as software for data analytics, innovative materials and self-drive factory vehicles. However, few things have the potential to reshape heavy vehicle manufacturing like the use of robots.

Queensland's well placed to support the introduction of advanced robotics among our manufacturers, with initiatives including Australia's first Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) Hub, which is being established at Northgate in Brisbane in partnership with the State Government, Queensland University of Technology, Urban Art Project and local industry.

South at Redbank, Ipswich, Rheinmetall Defence Australia is establishing its \$170m headquarters and Military Vehicle

Centre of Excellence (MILVEHCOE), a site from which the company will deliver 211 Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicles (CRV) to the Australian Army.

When completed later this year the MILVEHCOE will be the most advanced military-vehicle manufacturing facility in the country and will enhance the ecosystem of industrial capability.

The MILVEHCOE will also be supported by Queensland's first Defence Industry Hub, a \$5m centre for military manufacturing jobs and contract opportunities that is now open in the heart of Ipswich.

The hub will help local businesses get on the defence radar and be considered for contracts in areas such as heavy-vehicle manufacturing and maintenance, aerospace and autonomous-systems development.

Although it's unclear how the COVID-19 situation will continue to evolve in the weeks and months ahead, what is clear is Queensland manufacturing's strong position across a range of crucial industries.

We're an innovative and hardworking state with collaboration at our core, and it's those traits and others that will guide us through these tough times and towards new horizons.

Cameron Dick MP is Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning.

Transport and Main Roads working together with our heavy vehicle partners to make Queensland the safest and most productive state in Australia.

For more information, please visit www.tmr.qld.gov.au/heavyvehicles



Queensland Government

NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE REGULATOR

Making it easier to do business



'We're committed to keeping supply chains moving'

A MESSAGE FROM THE QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

Every Australian relies on the safe and efficient movement of essential goods.

With the emergence of COVID-19, there has rarely been a time in our nation's history as important as now to ensure food and essential goods continue to move across the nation.

The border between Queensland and NSW closed on March 26.

It was the first time the border had closed in 100 years, a necessary decision but not one taken lightly at the busiest border crossing in Australia.

Queensland's Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said it was now more important than ever to support the freight industry.

"Like many other industries, transport and logistics companies and their staff have had to adjust quickly and respond to specific changes in demand for essential goods and supplies," Mr Bailey said.

"Thanks to their efforts, they are helping the wider community through the worst health and economic crisis in living memory.

"Our role in government is to support the heavy vehicle industry through this unprecedented time.

"We have worked alongside the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Queensland Police Service to develop business continuity plans, so we maintain business as usual for our industry customers and keep the supply chain moving."

Mr Bailey said a joint Queensland Government and industry taskforce was established in mid March to ensure the supply of food and other essential goods for Queensland during the COVID-19 response.

"We're committed to working with industry on practical and pragmatic approaches and solutions to keep supply chains moving," Bailey said.

"We'll listen and quickly respond to the needs of industry to keep Queenslanders working and manage workplace risks.

"The health and safety of transport industry workers is paramount during this time.

"Like health workers, they provide an essential service and

we need to keep as many people in jobs as possible."

Mr Bailey said the Palaszczuk Government would continue to deliver its \$23bn roads and transport investment during the next four years.

"We have major jointly-funded upgrades happening in or nearby most of our major regional centres," Mr Bailey said.

"The \$514 million Bruce Highway upgrade south of Townsville at the Haughton River floodplain will significantly improve flood resilience at a section that is known for being cut off during major flood events.

"In the coming months,

Not only is it imperative that we have well maintained and efficient roads to support freight, we need to ensure we are doing all we can to promote safer behaviour on our roads and better awareness among drivers about how to drive around heavy vehicles

we'll also start construction on duplicating the Bruce Highway between Gordonvale and Edmonton, south of Cairns, while the Smithfield Bypass north of Cairns is well underway.

"Stage one of the Mackay Ring Road is on track to finish at the end of this year, as is the major Bruce Highway upgrade between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway on the Sunshine Coast.

"The \$1bn Gympie Bypass upgrade will start in mid-2020 too.

"Rockhampton is enjoying a mini-construction boom on the back of major highway upgrades north and west of the city, the design on the \$1bn Rockhampton Ring Road project is well advanced.

"We're almost finished work on M1 upgrades south of

Brisbane at the Gateway Merge and between Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes.

"While those wrap up, early works have already started on the next much larger M1 upgrades from Daisy Hill to Eight Mile Plains and from Varsity Lakes to Tugun.

Mr Bailey said the \$635m Warrego Highway Upgrade Program between Toowoomba and west of Miles would continue to build additional overtaking lanes, more wide centreline treatments and extra stopping bays.

He said the Toowoomba Bypass, which opened in September last year, had improved safety and efficiency for heavy vehicle access travelling from agricultural areas to processing and export facilities in South East Queensland.

Mr Bailey said working with the heavy vehicle industry to improve driver safety continued to be a major focus.

"My department has developed Queensland's Heavy Vehicle Safety Action Plan 2019-21—a plan that commits to 36 heavy vehicle safety interventions targeting safer roads, vehicles, speeds and people," he said.

"We've built 27 new rest areas and upgraded seven existing rest areas since 2013 to help combat driver fatigue.

"We're also supporting the Australian Trucking Association's (ATA) SAFET360 Truck, delivering important education to 16 to 25-year-old road users on sharing the roads with trucks.

"My department also hosts popular heavy vehicle toolbox talk sessions around the state, where truck drivers and operators can speak openly with our transport inspectors.

"Not only is it imperative that we have well maintained and efficient roads to support freight, we need to ensure we are doing all we can to promote safer behaviour on our roads and better awareness among drivers about how to drive around heavy vehicles."

To find out more about heavy vehicles, visit www.tmr.qld.gov.au/HeavyVehicles



Congestion remains on key urban freight routes so relatively small issues, such as eliminating level crossings, would be a quick and easy improvement

Road restrictions block freight networks

ROSANNE BARRETT

Bottlenecks from urban restrictions — as well as poor regional connections — are putting the brake on efficiency and productivity.

Infrastructure Australia has highlighted the protection of freight corridors from urban development and infrastructure upgrades as vital to allow the expected 26 per cent growth in freight demand over the next decade.

"Freight demand continues to grow quickly, (but) congestion remains on key urban freight routes, inconsistent regulation hinders efficiency, and key regional bottlenecks still constrain agricultural supply chains," the Australian Infrastructure Audit said.

Each year an average of three truckloads of freight is moved per person, and the freight task has grown 80 per cent over the past 15

years. Productivity in the road-freight network has stalled, however, due to regulation inconsistencies and congestion.

Glen Cameron Group chief executive officer Nick Capp points to city curfews and road-access restrictions as key blockages in freight transport.

"There is a bottleneck in regulation," he says.

"It's building up inefficiencies. You understand where they come from but there does need to be a bit of a shake-up. As we keep building out our cities, we've got to address some of these things."

He says there needs to be a balance between more flexible hours available to trucking and the daytime congestion the curfews cause.

Capp says toll roads are "just as congested" and echoes a call from the Australian Trucking Association for oversight of toll-road charges, independent of the road managers.

The ATA has called for the



Peter Colacino

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to regulate tolls, arguing they are unaffordable for the mainly small-business truck-driving industry.

A spokeswoman for the ACCC says they do not comment on potential complaints or investigations.

Vital road upgrades are being sought in addition to regulatory reform.

Infrastructure Australia's latest priority list highlights the importance of road upgrades. Three of the six high-priority projects are roads, while 11 of the 16 priority projects are roads.

But the independent body also points to the critical nature of on-going road maintenance.

Infrastructure Australia chief of policy and research Peter Colacino says road maintenance is critical to Australia.

"As a large nation with a widely dispersed population and widely dispersed economic activity our roads are critical to moving people and moving freight," he says.

Deloitte Access Economics director Eamon McGinn says Australia's road transport infrastructure is "on the whole" fairly good, and administrative issues cause the biggest bottlenecks.

"The biggest quick wins would likely be around relatively small issues such as eliminating level crossings, sealing certain rural

roads, allowing trucking companies to co-invest in the last mile to facilities so (more efficient vehicles) can be used more effectively," McGinn says.

"The bigger issues are really about administrative issues such as the paperwork needed to get access to the road network and the cost and compliance burden."

Infrastructure Australia has also highlighted the future-proofing importance of acquiring freight corridors to protect city logistics pathways from development as urban sprawl continues.

The Queensland Government has announced it will purchase the Townsville Eastern Access Corridor to meet future need.

The New South Wales Government is also investigating protection of four key corridors in western Sydney.

If quarantined for freight, Infrastructure Australia estimates a saving for future generations of more than \$6bn, while also improving efficiency.

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Technology 'tells' could save lives

FRED PAWLE

In poker, a "tell" is a sign you inadvertently give to other players revealing what is in your hand. Being aware of them reduces the risk of you losing your shirt.

In the new field of driver-fatigue monitoring, a "tell" is a sign you give a machine that you may no longer be fit to be behind the wheel. Unlike in poker, this "tell" could save more than your shirt.

The signs vary from one driver to another. It could be driving fast downhill or slow uphill, blinking often, dropping the head, being distracted or shifting around in the seat.

One of the fascinating and unforeseen findings in this new field has been that drivers who use the technology become aware of their own "tells" and act on them before the machine warns them to.

Professor Drew Dawson, of Central Queensland University's Adelaide campus, who is one of the nation's leading experts on sleep and fatigue, has just co-authored a report on fatigue monitoring systems for the National Heavy Vehicle Register.

Several systems were studied, but the most common one was the Guardian, by Seeing Machines, a company based in Canberra, which has a camera aimed at the driver's face. When the driver starts displaying "tells", both he and his base are warned and the camera starts recording the driver.

Dawson is clearly delighted with the way drivers have adapted to the technology, especially given that many were initially suspicious of it.

"This is the thing we didn't expect, which is fascinating," he says.

"The drivers are using it as a biofeedback tool. They told us they were learning their 'tells' so they can work out if they are fatigued before the machine does."

In those instances, they invariably pulled over for a rest and drank coffee to avoid a warning being sent back to base.

"They don't like getting caught by the machine," Dawson says.

Many of these drivers were initially sceptical about the technology, especially about having a camera in the cabin.

"Some of them thought that management had nothing better to do than sit around at base watching drivers, and thought it was like Big Brother," Dawson says.

But the camera in most systems only starts recording when there is a fatigue event, and even then only for a few seconds. When this foot-



Transport veteran Ron Finemore has kitted all of his 250 vehicles with Guardian units
SIMON DALLINGER

age is later shown to a driver for the first time, it is often a revelation, says Dawson.

"Drivers say, 'I had no idea! Sometimes people don't realise how fatigued they are.'"

These findings are leaving the current methods of fatigue management — log books — far behind, and for good reason. One of the assumptions upon which the logbook system is based is that fatigue is largely determined by how long the driver has been behind the wheel.

"There is no scientific evidence to support that," Dawson says.

"What the scientific findings show is that your alertness is as much dependent on the time of day as it is to how long you've been awake."

A driver is typically more tired

when he leaves a depot at 3am than he is after six hours of driving, when the sun is up and his body clock is at a high point.

Dawson says the National Transport Commission's current Regulation Impact Statement, which will be released for discussion in a few months, should recommend this technology be implemented in the most pragmatic way possible. In other words, "You shouldn't have to comply (with prescriptive rules), you should just have to prove you can do it safely."

This is because there is so much variation in the products on the market, and in the types of trucking operations that would use them. To apply fairly to the whole industry, a uniform set of rules would be complex and difficult.

"This is the greatest thing I've seen in my 59 years in the industry. It proves what I've been saying to anybody who will listen for the last 40 years"

RON FINEMORE

For example, should an operator kit all his trucks out with cheap monitoring systems, which are less reliable, or install the best technology in a select few trucks and assign drivers who are identified on the day as most at risk?

Operators should be free to make the best decisions for their own circumstances if they can prove their systems are safe, Dawson says.

"From a regulatory perspective, that makes sense. But companies

need guidance on how to do that."

One operator who doesn't need to be convinced about the benefits of this is transport veteran Ron Finemore, who has kitted all of his 250 vehicles with Guardian units.

"This is the greatest thing I've seen in my 59 years in the industry," he says.

"It proves what I've been saying to anybody who will listen for the last 40 years."

He says these systems are not just for the big operators. "The

small operators can do it better than me," he says.

A lot of them are family-operated, in which the manager at home is the spouse, which can alleviate the problem of the driver feeling persecuted by a boss. "They have an easier ability to talk to their people," he says.

Finemore says his own management team did a good job persuading the firm's drivers to embrace the technology.

"We said we are only interested in keeping you safe and getting you home safe."

Like Dawson, he says operators need to be given as much flexibility as possible to implement the benefits.

Dawson says it sometimes takes a "complacency disruption event" — in other words, a near

miss or, in extreme cases, the death of an employee — to convince operators to adopt lifesaving technology.

"That's when people say, 'We've got to do something'. They don't want their people to die. It really shocks them."

This has often been the reason operators have adopted it until now, given that there are no regulatory benefits.

But there is one other compelling benefit, which is financial. Being able to provide an insurance company with detailed safety procedures and records will lower premiums.

"The companies that are operating safely get a good deal, and are more competitive," Dawson says. That forces the "cowboys" to lift their game.

Report finds accidents attributable to truck-driver fatigue at lowest levels

FRED PAWLE

Accidents caused by truck-driver fatigue have declined dramatically since 2005, the latest figures from NTI, the nation's leading truck insurer, reveal.

NTI was due to release its biennial Accident Investigation Report at the Trucking Australia annual conference in April, but the conference has been postponed by the coronavirus pandemic, and the report has been postponed with it.

Instead, NTI has given The Australian some of the report's key findings. The most significant of these is that the proportion of large-loss accidents (from which total costs exceed \$50,000) attributable to fatigue are at the low-

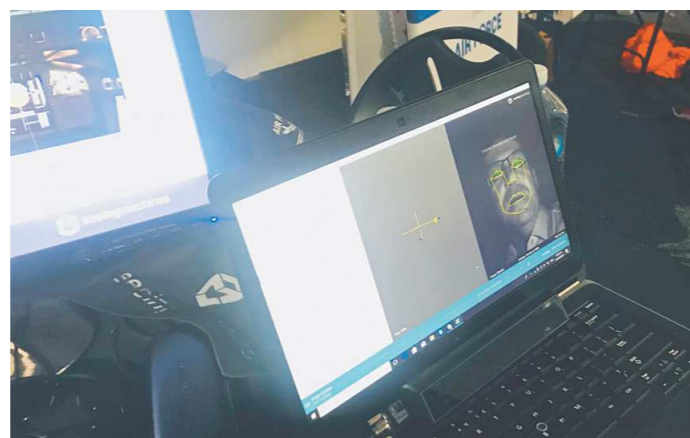
est level since NTI published its first report in 2005. Seventeen years ago the proportion was 27 per cent; the figure now is 9.6 per cent.

Fatigue is particularly dangerous, says the author of the report, Adam Gibson.

"Drivers have no opportunity to respond," he says.

"If you're asleep, you can't mitigate the severity of the accident. Anything we can do to push that down is important to the safety of drivers."

The two sharpest declines have coincided with changes to regulations, in 2008 and 2018, which firstly forced drivers and companies to keep detailed diaries then empowered drivers to pull over when they thought they



Seeing Machines' driver-fatigue monitoring technology

were not in a condition to drive. "We think that's off the back of a lot of hard work in the industry to work on that issue," Gibson says. Reducing fatigue-related accidents will now rely on the im-

plementation of new technology, which is already providing NTI with useful data.

NTI's analysis from clients who use Seeing Machines' driver-fatigue monitoring technology has found that truck drivers are significantly less likely than car drivers to use mobile phones while driving.

"We see that 76 per cent of trucks fitted with Seeing Machines recorded zero mobile phone usage events," he says.

Gibson says this contrasts starkly with figures from the Queensland University of Technology's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety.

In a survey of 800 car drivers, 77 per cent said they used their mobile phones while driving, and 40 per cent said they used phones

daily (handheld or hands-free) while driving. Another key finding is that in 80 per cent of fatal accidents involving a truck, the other driver or person is at fault.

"This challenges the stereotype around heavy vehicles and the transport industry," Gibson says, adding that this figure has been consistent for 12 years. "It goes against a lot of assumptions about truck drivers."

Gibson's colleague, NTI's chief sustainability officer Chris Hogarty, says it's a good reflection of the industry, especially in comparison to car drivers.

"The behavioural insights from the statistics that we have show that truck drivers treat driving as a profession, which sometimes gets lost in the per-

ception of our industry," he says.

"The paradox of NTI's safety initiatives is that they decrease the premiums the company can charge."

"As the harm measures reduce, that has a consequential effect on premiums," Hogarty says. "It's a by-product, it's not an objective — that's one way to put ourselves out of business."

NTI's approach is to ensure that the technology is not only installed but is used properly.

"You don't always see the benefits just because they've implemented it," Hogarty says.

Hogarty equates safety with sustainability for both the trucking industry and its insurers.

"We are using that as a driving force behind what we do," he says.

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Authorised by Ben Maguire, Australian Trucking Association, 25 National Circuit, Forrest













'Smart caps' to improve health and safety

ROSANNE BARRETT

Hats that measure brainwave patterns of truck drivers are reducing the impacts of fatigue on the roads.

The Heavy Vehicle Safety Around Port project provided 75 drivers around the Port of Brisbane with "smart caps" in a 12-month pilot program to improve health and safety. It used electroencephalogram-measuring headbands to provide real-time data to operators and drivers about their alertness during a period of 18,500 hours.

Queensland Trucking Association chief executive officer Gary Mahon says it was a very successful initiative they hope to extend more broadly.

"One of the causes that we push for is the adoption of technological improvements for the management of fatigue," he says.

"Fatigue management has been fundamentally managed via a logbook and prescriptive hours, which is a system that has been in place for about 86 years."

"There is a lot of technology available now that are considerable improvements on counting some hours and writing them in a book, and the smart cap technology is one element."

The pilot program found almost half the fatigue alarms went off during 9am to 2pm, and the early warning system was highly effective. There were no fatigue-related incidents during the pilot. There were also other activities aimed at improving wellness in truck drivers, including health checks, flu vaccinations and skin checks. The pilot received \$302,000 in funding under the NHVR safety initiative.

PBPL (Port of Brisbane Pty Ltd) COO Peter Keyte said the lessons identified in the trial will be shared with the broader port community.

"Both the QTA and PBPL are strongly committed to the heavy vehicle safety agenda, and this project has delivered safety-focused, tangible improvements for businesses and drivers in and around the port precinct," he says.

The urban port has more than 3.1 million vehicular movements on its roads each year, with a growing proportion of freight trucks.

Safety is an ongoing issue for the trucking industry, including issues around fatigue-management, driver inattention, safer roads, training and more appropriate rest areas.

Too many truck drivers die at work. In the last quarter of 2019, 19 road deaths involved articulated trucks, and another 20 deaths involved heavy rigid trucks.

While the decadal trend is down, last year's toll was a spike on the previous 12 months, according to the Fatal Heavy Vehicle Crashes Australia Quarterly Bulletins.

The Transport Workers' Union has called for the reinstatement of an oversight body to set minimum awards as a "safe wage" across industry. Industry disagrees.

At the end of a decade-long national road safety strategy, last year the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport established an inquiry into the importance of a viable, safe, sustainable and efficient road transport industry. The wide-ranging review is investigating the importance of a minimum award rate for drivers, appropriate regulation and infrastructure, training standards, and the social and economic impact of road deaths and injuries.

Recent public hearings have been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.