

Industry Advisory Group

Meeting: 22nd May, 2006

Industry Advisory Group (IAG) meetings are held twice a year to brief peak transport industry body representatives on the progress of National Transport Commission (NTC) reforms and provide a forum to discuss reform issues. This communiqué has been published to share information released at the IAG briefing more widely and transparently with the transport industry.

In opening the meeting, NTC Chairman Michael Deegan said he welcomed input from industry to ensure the NTC is focussing on the right priorities. He noted a growing urgency to drive industry productivity reform that is underpinned by safe and sustainable outcomes. This includes cleaning-up previous national reforms, where the lack of national uniformity impedes industry efficiency.

Specific issues addressed at the meeting include:

Concessional Mass Limits

Concessional Mass Limits (CML) policy is currently out for voting by Ministers, closing on 8 June 2006. If approved, the reform will formalise a third level of national Concessional Mass Limits (CML) to complement existing General Mass Limit and Higher Mass Limit schemes.

CML would become available to operators accredited under the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme (NHVAS) Mass Management module. This will include a standard for suspension maintenance, which now also references the ARTSA Air Suspension Code.

The introduction of CML would coincide with the introduction of Measurement Adjustments on 1 July, 2006. A six month transition period has been agreed to enable industry to update their maintenance systems for audit purposes.

An Information Bulletin on CML is available for download here:

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/DocView.aspx?page=A02312402400640020>

NTC also advised that it could be asked to undertake work on in-service testing of road friendly suspensions in its 2006/07 work program, as outlined in AusLink Bilateral Agreements, subject to Australian Transport Council (ATC) approval.

Performance Based Standards

At its meeting on 10 February, COAG identified Performance Based Standards (PBS) as a “key productivity reform”. Project governance, interim standards, institutional arrangements (“binding and effective national decision making”), quad axle groups, B-triple routes and project delivery for implementation in 2008 are now a key focus for the NTC to meet the intent of the Council of Australian Government (COAG) program.

A new senior Policy Steering Committee, chaired by Main Roads Director General Alan Tesch, has been formed to progress these issues. NTC will issue a further industry update on PBS reform progress in the near future.

Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Review

A scoping study to improve the alignment of industry accreditation schemes has outlined two key options – a modular approach within a single national framework; and a single national scheme. The release of a discussion paper has been delayed pending completion of Austroads' review of accreditation scheme safety impacts, which has experienced difficulties in accessing data.

NTC will examine the potential to accelerate the review if consensus in the approach from industry and government is achieved.

Heavy Vehicle Driver Fatigue

A number of National Heavy Vehicle Driver Fatigue (HVDF) Reform draft policy papers have been published on the NTC website. The policy proposals, developed through extensive consultation, address unresolved issues and variations from the 2004 HVDF package endorsed by Transport Ministers. Public comment will be sought on final policy proposals, draft laws and a Regulatory Impact Statement in August 2006 for a 6 week period.

More information and fact sheets are available here:

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/ViewPage.aspx?page=A022125073007800200>

Productivity Commission Inquiry Submission

This document is available on the NTC website. The submission is consistent with the NTC's *Twice the Task* project and focuses on the potential for pricing to optimise utilisation of both the road and rail networks and improve industry productivity.

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/NewsDetail.aspx?page=A0240030550000002000189>

Heavy Vehicle Speed Review

NTC advised that a survey on driver attitudes to speeding will be released in the near future. This will be followed by the development of Chain of Responsibility (CoR) policy for speed management. Speed limiter tampering will be addressed by a CoR approach to vehicle standards. Draft policy proposals will be released later this year.

Front Axle Mass Package

At its November 2005 meeting, ATC gave in-principle support for a reform package to increase steer axle mass on vehicles over 16 tonnes, which feature front underrun protection (UNECE R93), cabin strength (UNECE R29) and Euro 4 emissions standards (ADR 80/01). NTC has data to support an indicative 500kg increase in steer axle mass. Further data is being sought from industry and road agencies.

Engine Brake Noise

NTC is developing a standard to address excessive in-service engine brake noise caused by worn, defective or inferior mufflers. Research has identified a means of picking-out 'annoying' engine brake noise from the traffic stream. A cut-off point which represents the point of 'annoyance' will be set through focus groups and consultation.

A second component of the regulation is the potential for engine brake noise exclusion zones in noise-sensitive high density population areas, where there is no risk to vehicle safety. The use of 'quiet' engine brakes would still be permitted. A draft RIS will be released shortly.

Axle Mass Breaches within Gross Mass Limits

The NTC has undertaken to explore the feasibility of a defence for (minor) axle mass breaches, where the overall gross mass limit has not been exceeded; and total road wear is not increased. NTC will consult closely with industry before submitting a policy proposal to Transport Agency Chief Executives (TACE) in September 2006.

NTC Role in COAG Reforms

NTC advised industry of its role in the COAG national reform process. An information sheet is available by clicking here:

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/FileView.aspx?page=A02310401400760020>

Heavy Vehicle Road Pricing Annual Adjustment

The ATC voted unanimously against the NTC's Heavy Vehicle Road Pricing Determination recommendation. As a result, current legislation to adjust annual registration charges, based on previous ATC decisions, will continue to apply. NTC's role is to calculate and publish the annual adjustment, which is available on the NTC website.

<http://www.ntc.gov.au/NewsDetail.aspx?page=A0240030550000002000187>

C&E Implementation

Victoria and New South Wales enacted Compliance & Enforcement legislative changes on 30 September 2005. Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory are well advanced in the development of their legislation and are introducing their amendments in 2006. NTC has been unable to confirm detailed timing for other jurisdictions.

NTC has facilitated meetings between industry and local road agencies to address the potential for resolving on-the-ground inconsistencies arising from jurisdictions' variations to the Model Bill.

Meeting Attendance

Organisations represented at IAG include: Australian Trucking Association, Australian Road Train Association, Australian Automobile Association, Australia Post, Commercial Vehicle Industry Association of Australia, Isuzu-GM, NatRoad, National Bulk Tankers Association, New South Wales Road Transport Association, Truck Industry Council and Victorian Transport Association.

For more information:

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