

National Transport Commission
Level 3, 600 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia
(www.ntc.gov.au)

Contribution to: Consultation on heavy vehicle charges (Public submission –
Heavy vehicle charges consultation report) [1]

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[1] Contribution submitted on January 12, 2021 to Ramon Staheli, Project manager, National Transport Commission (NTC), Melbourne, Australia at Email: rstaheli@ntc.gov.au & enquiries@ntc.gov.au

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Note: The contributor (Dr. Santosh Kumar Mishra) agrees the following submission to be published online by the National Transport Commission (NTC).

Question 1: What are your views on the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers Meeting's proposal to increase heavy vehicle registration and Road User Charges by 2.5 per cent in 2021–22?

Addressing issues related to motor vehicle size and weight requires balance while accommodating change. An objective, rational approach to truck size and weight policy must be developed. In addition, public policy must address whether to allow the operation of larger and heavier trucks and under what conditions, if any. At different times, the questions should be framed in terms of allowing incremental increases locally (within a state) or regionally (within adjoining states). In other cases, however, national uniformity should be sought at increased levels, for example, to allow national network or corridor-type operations.

Question 2: What are your views on the proposal to increase heavy vehicle registration and Road User Charges by 2.5 per cent in 2021–22?

Refer to information on page 7 of the document titled “Heavy vehicle charges consultation report, January 2021”, under sub-heading: 1.1 The NTC’s responsibilities (posted on: https://www.ntc.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/files/Heavy%20vehicle%20charges%20consultation%20report%202021-22_0.pdf): I agree with the statement of the National Transport Commission (NTC) that it has ongoing responsibilities for recommending heavy vehicle charges to the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers Meeting (ITMM). I am of the view that intended charges, which are expected to be increased automatically by 13.4 % for the year 2021–22, should also envisage costs to be incurred in the years (decades) to come towards maintaining damage to roads and related infrastructure resulting from global warming and associated wild fire. According to data published by the IBISWorld in March 2020 (in the document titled 2019-20 Australian Bushfire Crisis: The Economic Impact on web link: <https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-insider/media/4641/bushfire-report-final.pdf>), the transport sector in Australia was expected to endure losses of \$229.8 million during 2019-20 due to bushfires. Thus, while taking decisions on heavy vehicle charges, these aspects need to be taken into account. Environmental impacts are important considerations.

Bushfires damage roads in different ways. They can severely damage the road surface, compromise structures such as retaining walls and bridges, and destroy signs and line markings. In some cases, roads have been burned multiple times and fires can cause damage that might not be obvious. The bushfires have not only been made more likely and intense by climate change, they also add to it.

With evidence that climate change is causing Earth's temperatures to rise, the international community, in the 21st century, is witnessing fires around the world. It is increasing and will increase and occur in areas that have not historically experienced them, e. g., incidences of wild fire in parts of Los Angeles and California in the United States of America. Some experts have opined that the bushfires in New South Wales and Queensland Australia are a regular natural occurrence. However, scientists and experts alike (even firefighters agree) that the fires here have been increasing in size, duration, and intensity. These events are causing unprecedented damage to the environment and local wildlife.