



TRUCKRIGHT ABN 17426245866

TRUCKRIGHT Industry Vehicle (TIV)

Ten Years on the road, 2019.

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TRUCKRIGHT Awarded Highly Commended, 3M ACRS Diamond Road Safety Awards 2015.
Finalist 3M ACRS Diamond Road Safety Awards 2016, Awarded Churchill Fellowship 2016.
Green Reflector Marking Informal Truck Bays, finally completed the Newell Highway 2019.

Response to HVNL Review Paper 5 Safe Vehicles.

Question 1: What risks to safe vehicles that are currently out of scope for the HVNL should be brought into scope? What is in scope that shouldn't be?

As a driver, some of this is beyond my responsibility, but I do wish to contribute and believe I can offer some value.

No manufacturer will specify what level of road impact, their trucks are designed to deal with. The road is my workplace, yet is not recognised as such and so, any deformations, irregularities or failures, impact on the vehicle, the driver and of course, back into the road. I continue to ask for a national road standard to be agreed to and then roads to be maintained to that standard.

The TRUCKRIGHT Industry Vehicle has the capability to read and record impacts into the truck. It was initially activated by myself as the driver where I knew and or remembered bumps etc to be. It is now a fully automated system that can be set to record both the impact and the GPS location of any impact above a pre-set level on each axle group of the b-double set. The biggest impact was 2.3 g, so nearly two and a half times, the static weight of the loaded b-double. This meant a near 17 tonne impact on the steer axle, running at 6.5 tonnes and a 50 plus tonne impact on the back tri-axle group running at 22.5 tonne on HML.

Such impacts, can not only cause damage to the driver, but to the truck and its components, but no one currently accepts this, let alone will act on it. I believe we can save lives, damage to drivers, trucks and trailers and further road damage, if such impacts were quickly repaired. This will also give better value for some of the road maintenance budget. ARRB has done some studies on heavy vehicle ride and the effects on drivers and vehicles, but this is not done with fully loaded trucks, so whilst it may be a guide, it is not completely accurate. I ask this be taken into consideration in the context of SAFE Vehicles.

Question 2: Have we covered the issues relating to safe vehicles accurately and comprehensively? If not, what do we need to know?

I will raise some issues.

1. Inspections where defects are not recognised, either at the roadside or during annual inspection, due to lack of knowledge or experience of the inspector and this has another side, where minor non safety related defects are found and can be used against a company. The other side was used where a "C" section of the rear bumper of an A trailer, so generally covered by the B trailer in a b-double combination, meant the number plate, did not meet the 45 degree angle for vision. Nothing to do with road safety, but was used against the company to increase the number of defects the company had against it.
2. In a previous job, I continually wrote defect sheets, was threatened with the sack if I did not write them, but the company refused to do the repairs. It became such an issue, that to reduce costs, mechanics were threatened with being held liable for the cost of repairs done, if they were not authorised and this was for fuel tankers. I expect it has since changed, but it does show the way some companies see the cost of maintenance.
3. The issue of how visible headlights are with the fitting of bullbars has come and gone a number of times. A truck registered for many years, was told it would not be registered because the headlights could not be seen from a 45 degree angle. This caused much uncertainty for truck owners and manufacturers, as well as bulbar manufacturers and I believe, this is still to be sorted.
4. Minor modifications, such as the fitting of a turntable or fuel tank, now need to be inspected or approved, simply raising the cost of something done by many for years. Can this be justified and does it improve road safety?
5. PBS vehicles, if they are meant to be at the top of the compliance tree, then why do some truck and dog combinations not even have a mudflap, let alone mudguards over the axle which protrudes from the front of the dog trailer. Some of these combinations also have very long drawbars, such that a car being overtaken may not see the low drawbar and pull out into it. I do not believe there was initially any requirement for lights or markings on such long drawbars to try and prevent this. I have raised both issues, but still see such combinations on the road without any changes.
6. I do have a concern with cheaper replacement parts, but not necessarily meeting safety or minimum standards. As a driver, not my responsibility, but such decisions can affect my safety on the road and I would like to know for certain such things will not happen.
7. I do agree with a requirement for annual inspections of heavy vehicles. With the kilometres they travel, the loads they carry and as above, the roads they travel on, all of these will cause wear and tear and should be monitored. Some companies do not maintain their vehicles as they should and whilst this is a completely separate issue, the rates paid do affect whether such maintenance can be afforded by some.
8. I was told by one road authority officer, they are there to protect us and I do believe any driver will welcome having something found that will help them be safer, yet the standards of training for such officers, must be improved and consistent.

Question 3: How can the future HVNL most effectively deliver safer vehicles to the road? Which aspects of the PBS scheme are working well, and which aren't? What barriers to the broad uptake of safer vehicles exist?

Please see above re PBS. Also I do have a concern, that should PBS become only available to those who can afford it, as it may be seen by many to do now, then this may well give bigger companies

not only an unfair advantage, but may eventually exclude smaller companies from ever being able to compete. The only other comment here would be that whilst I do recognise international standards may help with adopting some technologies etc, our distances, lousy roads and wildlife must be taken into consideration so adopting any international standards does not actually decrease safety for Australian truck drivers.

Question 4: How can the future HVNL encourage suitable maintenance programs? How can it most effectively identify and remove dangerous vehicles from the road?

Trucksafe is currently the only industry accreditation scheme. Whilst it is not perfect, it is many years since I have heard, "It has no teeth and those in it break the law like everyone else". This may well have been from those outside with nothing, who saw it as an advantage for those within. I do believe it has helped with driver health, it is the only thing in our industry that has got drivers to have yearly medicals and I do believe it has saved lives.

In regards to maintenance, Trucksafe is again, the only thing that has even closely made any effort to see maintenance improve generally. There is little doubt, having worked for some of our biggest companies, that they see maintenance as simply another cost. Drivers lives mean little to many, they say otherwise, but my involvement showed the bigger they were, they less it meant. This is 10 years old and I hope it has improved, but if you don't make enough money to earn a living, too often the first thing cut is maintenance. There is an undisputed link from where I sit as a driver, and the more the big freight shippers say, it is not just about price, the more I believe they lie.

Question 5: How can the future HVNL meet the assurance needs of all Australian state and territory road transport authorities in a way that does not unreasonably impose on operators?

Those states who do not require yearly inspections and who then rely on only roadside enforcement, will never get all trucks roadworthy. Trucksafe alone will not get all fixed either, but does make more of a difference than anything else I am aware of. I must say though, that why is there so much effort on our trucks being roadworthy, when many of our roads are not truckworthy. Few, other than truck drivers, see and feel every impact, not only into their body, but into the truck and then back into the road. Every impact adds to fatigue levels and if you really want to improve safety, then you must do more to improve the roads.

The TIV can read the impact into the truck. The biggest hit was 2.3 G and this is a severe impact. If all such impacts were removed, not only would there be far less maintenance on trucks and such costs reduced, there would be less fatigue on components, less component failures and less stress into drivers and their bodies. I do believe, these two things must be looked at together.

Question 6: Do we need assurances regarding repairs and replacement parts? If so, could these be achieved using standards? Should third-party repairers be explicitly included in the Chain of Responsibility? How can defect clearance processes be reasonably expedited?

Yes, again as a driver, I am not responsible for such purchases and costs, but I will be the only one to be directly impacted. The boss may cop a repair, the mechanic may cop a kick in the backside or loss of work for supplying cheap replacement parts, but I am the only one likely to be directly impacted, possibly by involvement in a crash, or even losing my life. This is a major issue and again, comes back to earnings and the industry being cost driven and forced to reduce costs by customers. No one else is asked to reduce costs each year, when their own costs increase, how else can it be done? Yes there are some opportunities with improved efficiency, but there is only a certain window for freight and trucks.

Defects for non-safety items are used to punish drivers, if done with the wrong intent. We welcome others helping keep us safe by finding a problem we are not aware of, but defects issued for things with little or no safety impact, should not be used to simply screw over a driver. The lost time, getting it fixed, then cleared can I feel sometimes be deliberate and the driver bears the loss. Yes the owner pays for the repairs, but it is the driver who loses wages when the truck is not working. Clearances must be easier for simple things and not used as de-facto impuneative measures against drivers.

Question 7: Should the future HVNL apply a risk-to-safety threshold for vehicle standards and loading matters?

Yes.