



Speech by


**Anastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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## HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.26 pm): I am very pleased to rise to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012. It is very pleasing to see that the transport minister has reintroduced the bill with only some very minor technical changes but there has not been any substantial change to the legislation that I introduced into this House when I was the transport minister.

This is a very significant piece of microeconomic reform. When I was transport minister, all jurisdictions came together at the ministerial council meeting and were very supportive of the implementation of this heavy vehicle national law. We will be supporting this legislation as it represents an important part of the COAG reform agenda. It will have great benefits for Queensland and the nation as a whole.

As I said when I introduced the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2011, in the past the heavy vehicle industry was governed and regulated by a dozen national laws that had been nationally approved over the past two decades. Despite being introduced with the best of intentions, these model laws often lacked conformity as jurisdictions would often adopt the model laws to suit their own individual needs and concerns. With this bill we now have one single national law to be adopted in a consistent manner in every jurisdiction as template law—with the exception of Western Australia, which is planning to mirror the legislation at some time in the future. All jurisdictions will pass legislation to ensure the national law as enacted by Queensland is effectively applied as law in their own jurisdiction.

Queensland has a very strong record when it comes to heavy vehicle regulation. We are head and shoulders above other jurisdictions when it comes to the modernisation of laws in this area. Queensland was the stand-out state when it came time to consider where the new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was to be based. We have an excellent relationship with the heavy vehicle industry and had been at the forefront of modernising our regulations in this area and implementing model law. That is why Queensland was chosen as the host jurisdiction for the new national regulator. I am pleased to say that it was the Labor government, through hard work in this area over many years, that made Queensland's claim to be the host jurisdiction undeniable.

As I mentioned, we have been an enthusiastic early adopter of model laws in this area. Consequently, there are very few substantive changes to this bill that will impact heavy vehicle operators in Queensland. In relation to Queensland being the host regulator, I want to raise something that I was considering when I was minister that the current minister may want to give some consideration to as well. I refer to whether or not the regulator would be based in Brisbane or whether some consideration could be given to basing it in, say, perhaps Toowoomba. Toowoomba is an area that has a lot of transportation. Many of the vehicles come down the range to the port. It would send a very good signal to a regional community that the host regulator was being based not in the Brisbane CBD but actually in a regional area. I ask the minister to perhaps explore that issue further. There may be some reasons why that cannot be done, but that does give the opportunity for Rockhampton or Toowoomba or a regional centre to be the base for the regulator. That would be a very good symbol for the industry as well. There are going to be many arguments for and against, but I ask the minister if he would not mind taking that matter into

consideration. It would send a strong message to some of our regional towns that we are serious about growing the industry and growing jobs.

As I said in my speech in 2011, Queensland has a long history of working with industry to find practical solutions to operational realities. This has resulted in the implementation of a number of local productivity initiatives to suit Queensland conditions which vary from productivity initiatives implemented in other jurisdictions. A good example of this is the Grain Harvest Management Scheme. This scheme recognises the inherent difficulties of transporting a bulk commodity where varying moisture contents and densities can prevent an accurate load calculation. The Grain Harvest Management Scheme relieves this element of uncertainty by providing scheme participants with a certain amount of flexibility above normal mass limits. This is something that the industry raised with me time and time again—that is, there needs to be flexibility in terms of mass limits. Through the use of agreed administrative processes and compliance activities, industry and the Department of Transport and Main Roads can ensure the conduct of an efficient grain harvest and protection of road infrastructure.

Queensland can be rightly proud of the role we have played in developing heavy vehicle regulation over the past few decades. That commitment to ease the burden on industry and improve safety continues with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator reform. The benefits that this reform will bring are considerable and demonstrate how important the heavy vehicle industry is not only to Queensland but also to the rest of Australia. It has been estimated that the savings to industry from the establishment of a single national regulator will be approximately \$1.47 billion over 22 years for Queensland alone and as high as \$12 billion over the same period Australia-wide. From now on trucking companies will have a one-stop shop—the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator—to organise their permits, register their vehicles and comply with fatigue management regulations. No longer will these businesses have to liaise with different officers in different jurisdictions just to complete a journey that crosses state borders. The time and money saved to those businesses can be passed on to their customers through lower rates. Ultimately, consumers should benefit from cheaper goods.

In conclusion I want to place on the record my thanks for all of the staff whom I used to work with at the Department of Transport and Main Roads. This legislation did not just come about overnight. If one looks at the volume of the legislation and its detail, this has been in the making for a number of years and there have been some very dedicated officers who have been focusing on this. It is a huge credit to them for the work that they have done, not just in Queensland but the work they have done in dealing with their state counterparts and dealing with the Commonwealth government. They now have the pleasure to see the final product of their years of investment become a reality.

I also want to express my thanks to the industry. The industry participated in a lot of consultations in relation to this bill. It played a very important role. I thank it for raising issues with me in my time as transport minister—very complex issues. It put a challenge to me early on when I was transport minister in that it wanted me to go for a ride in a B-double from Toowoomba down the range out to the port—which I did. I hope the minister also takes that up, because it is not until you are sitting there next to the driver that you actually understand the complex issues that drivers face on the road. They drive for long periods of time. I was only in the truck for a couple of hours. However, they drive long distances. Queensland is a huge state. There are many issues in relation to fatigue and the quality of the roads. So I really want to place on record my thanks to the industry for raising these issues with me.

I also want to place on record my thanks to the Transport Workers Union. It was also involved in discussions about the national laws, and it contributed at a national level as well. It was great to see not just the public servants, not just the ministers but the industry and the unions all coming together. This is the final product of their work. Everybody has a right to feel very proud that this legislation will pass through this House today. I also want to thank the new minister for not changing the bill. Essentially, it is the same bill that I had introduced. That is a sign that the government is recognising the work of the former government in a bipartisan way, shall I say—a very rare occurrence in this House—in that we know the significance of this legislation. It is going to benefit industry, it is going to benefit the workers and it is something that every member of this House can be rightfully proud of today. In conclusion, as Queensland is the host jurisdiction, I again ask the minister to please give some consideration to basing the headquarters in a rural location. That would send a very strong message and he would have my support on that.