




Speech by

Darren Grimwade

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (11.41 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012. I thank my colleagues in the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee and our chairperson, Mr Howard Hobbs, the member for Warrego, for their contributions to the committee reviewing the legislation. I also thank the research directors and secretariat who assisted us, as well as all the stakeholders who provided valuable submissions on this bill. This is the first bill that has been referred to our committee for examination and I must say it is probably the largest that the House has seen since the LNP was elected.

The bill introduces a national scheme legislation for which our great state is the lead jurisdiction. The key policy objective of this legislation is to reconcile variations in state heavy vehicle laws to a single unified approach applicable across all states and territories to establish a National Heavy Vehicle Regulator responsible for the administration of those laws. The Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012 will replace 12 previous model laws that operate all across Australia. The unification of national heavy vehicle laws is necessary to address a longstanding problem of contradictory and inconsistent state laws that stifle productivity and hamper the promotion of safety.

The creation of this bill goes right back to 2009 when COAG agreed to establish a National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to administer a national body of law to govern the regulation of heavy vehicles. This bill was first introduced to the parliament on 15 November 2011 by the previous Labor government in the 53rd Parliament and it was referred to the then Transport and Local Government Committee. The Transport and Local Government Committee had not completed its report at the time of the dissolution of parliament on 19 February 2012, at which time that bill lapsed. As a committee, our job was nonetheless made a little easier as we had a history of submissions from stakeholders to review. All previous submitters were written to and asked to update, amend or withdraw their previous submissions where necessary. In total, the committee received 17 submissions, although one of those was later withdrawn, leaving us with 16 submissions to take into account.

The committee was cognisant of the multi-stage approach being taken to the legislative reform process. Transport and Main Roads advised the committee that there were over 1,000 technical and policy issues raised during the consultation process on the bill. While some of those have been addressed in the bill, some will need to be addressed and incorporated in the amendment bill as the current time frame did not allow for them to be incorporated in this bill. It is important to note that the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill is currently being finalised and should address a large number of those outstanding technical and policy issues.

It is very important though, due to the time frames of implementing this national reform and Queensland being the lead jurisdiction, that we pass this legislation and use the amendment bill to correct any technical changes that are needed. It is for this reason that our committee recommended that this bill be passed. It is also noted that a large number of the submitters recommended that the legislation be passed.

In their submissions to the committee, the National Farmers Federation and AgForce raised issues of funding for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. I took a keen interest in this area of the bill. The committee came to the strong view that funding for road maintenance and upgrades in Queensland should not be reduced as a result of the cost of establishing and maintaining the office of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Specific details in relation to funding was asked of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator project office in a public briefing on 3 August 2012. The response indicated they were endeavouring to create the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator within the pool of funding that is currently in existence. The office also indicated that savings through having one national body rather than doing things eight times individually will enable the regulator to make savings.

Concerns were raised in relation to pilot and escort arrangements. I understand that the member for Kallangur undertook a large amount of investigation and has a keen interest in this part of the bill. I will not add further to the debate on that as I know that he will talk about those issues. Ultimately, however, it is a big issue with regard to the large amount of pilots that are needed as the Queensland economy expands over the next decade and the mining industry demands more pilots to transport large heavy vehicles.

Driver fatigue was another issue that was raised and the National Road Freighters Association also made a submission on the subject. The issue centred around flexibility with regard to the current requirements to stop for a 24-hour break period, even if the driver is within close proximity of home or a town with a rest facility. Under the current legislation, if a driver is within a few kilometres of home or a town with a rest facility, legally they would not be able to finish their journey in that safe place. They would be forced to pull over on the side of the road and endure their rest period. At times this can be in an unsafe location. Ultimately, the committee was satisfied that the intention of the regulator is to resolve operational issues relating to the driver fatigue situation.

In a further submission, the Suncorp Group raised concerns in relation to CTP insurance. It had concerns that registrations will shift to the state with the lowest CTP premiums, leading to market volatility and threatening the ongoing viability of CTP schemes nationally. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator project office provided information that led the committee to believe that any concerns raised here will be addressed in the amendment bill. It is the intention that CTP will be charged at the garage address of that vehicle.

It is important to note that industry is fully supportive of the national law, as the benefits gained will flow on to itself and, of course, on to consumers. In a nutshell, this reform will allow Queensland operators to contact one central regulatory agency, a one-stop shop if you like, for things like registration renewals, logbook queries, access permits, escort requirements for wide loads and lots of other services. It is for those reasons and after addressing concerns raised by stakeholders that I will be supporting the bill in this House today. I look forward to reviewing the amendment bill when it becomes available and further addressing some of the minor technicalities to ensure this national reform is up and running by 1 January 2013. I commend the bill to the House.