




Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Wednesday, 22 August 2012

HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (9.41 pm): The opposition will be supporting the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012. The bill establishes the new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator here in Queensland and creates the heavy vehicle national law. This reform can be traced back—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms TRAD: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask that if the Attorney is going to interject—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): The Attorney is Acting Leader of the House while the Leader of the House is absent.

Ms TRAD: The Leader of the House is here, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Stevens: But I am out of my seat.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure that the ministers will resolve which seats they need to be in should they need to interject any further.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for providing a level of order to the place. I will start again.

The opposition will be supporting the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012. The bill establishes the new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator here in Queensland and creates the heavy vehicle national law. This reform can be traced back to 2 July 2009, when COAG agreed to establish the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and a national body of law consistent across all jurisdictions governing the regulation of all vehicles weighing more than 4.5 tonnes. Once approved, the heavy vehicle national law, HVNL, will be the primary source of regulation for heavy vehicles in Australia.

As host jurisdiction for the regulator, Queensland is the first state to pass the model laws. When the national regulator commences operations on 1 January next year and the national model law comes into effect, it will replace dozens of previous model laws governing different aspects of heavy vehicle operations.

The simplified law, coupled with the single national regulator, will bring benefits to Queensland and other jurisdictions. It has been estimated that these reforms could save the heavy vehicle industry as much as \$12 billion Australia-wide over a period of 22 years. In Queensland alone, the saving could be as much as \$1.47 billion.

The national model law will cover a wide range of matters including heavy vehicle registration, vehicle standards rules regulations, heavy vehicle registration charges, mass and loading regulations, oversize and overmass vehicles regulations, restricted access vehicles regulations, higher mass limits regulations, heavy vehicle driver fatigue and heavy vehicle speeding compliance. I note that there are some matters not covered by the model law, including the transport of dangerous goods, traffic laws or passenger transport regulation. I also note that the national law does not currently include heavy vehicle driver licensing but that is subject to an ongoing body of work and may at some future stage be incorporated into the national law.

In Queensland we have a strong record on heavy vehicle regulation. Compared to other jurisdictions, we have been at the forefront of modernising the law in this area and have kept abreast of the national law reforms in this area. That is one of the reasons Queensland was chosen as the host jurisdiction for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Our record of reform in this area means that the new national model law will have only minor impacts in Queensland as we have already implemented the bulk of previous model laws.

At the moment, heavy vehicle operators and drivers must follow different regulations in each state and territory they drive through. Juggling the different requirements of different jurisdictions can be confusing, expensive and time consuming for operators and for drivers. A single regulator implementing a single national law will mean that complying with the regulations will be simpler, cheaper and quicker for the heavy vehicle industry.

The national model law enjoys strong support from industry. The submissions received from stakeholders were broadly supportive of these reforms. I note that the staff from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator project office have met with many stakeholders and have worked with them to resolve as many issues as possible. I do note one issue, however, that was raised by the Australian Logistics Council, ALC, regarding the level of staffing for the national regulator. The ALC was concerned to ensure there were sufficient numbers of staff with technical expertise to ensure the regulator could hit the ground running and do the job that was expected of it by industry. I understand that, while there will be a number of staff in the national heavy vehicle office in Brisbane, a large part of the front-line work will likely be undertaken by staff located in other states and territories. Those services will be contracted through service agreements between the national regulator and those other jurisdictions. I am concerned, however, that the flagged job cuts in the Department of Transport and Main Roads may see qualified staff with experience in heavy vehicle regulation lose their jobs. This may give rise to the situation where the new regulator does not have enough qualified staff to do its job. I would ask the minister to advise the House whether the government has terminated the contracts of any temporary staff who were working in the area of heavy vehicle regulation—that is a question to the minister, if he is bothering to listen—or whether any such staff will be at risk of losing their jobs under the minister's plan to cut almost 2,000 jobs from DTMR.

I want to place on record my thanks to all those in Queensland and in other jurisdictions who have worked hard over many years to harmonise Australia's heavy vehicle regulations into this national model law. I particularly want to thank the parliamentary committee that investigated this. I note that there are a number of people in this chamber who sit on that committee and have scrutinised the national model laws. I commend the bill to the House.