




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (12.35 pm): I rise in the House to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2012. There are a number of reasons for rising today to speak to this bill. First of all, as a transport and logistics officer in the Australian Army of some 30 years experience, I recall many years ago the difficulty I had when, as a young lieutenant posted as troop commander in Puckapunyal with Dad, Dave and Denny, moving heavy vehicle loads or wide and over-dimensional loads such as Leopard tanks and engineer plant and equipment. It was extremely difficult for us to organise to bring them to exercises up here—in fact, often up to my now home town of Townsville's High Range. We had to go through no less than three state jurisdictions. Albeit that we had coverage under the Defence Act, we still always tried to comply with state regulations. I can tell members that it was an administrative and costly nightmare. The other reason I rise in support of this bill is largely because as the member for Townsville I understand that we are geographically dislocated from much of the country. Therefore we rely heavily on road transport, and cost of compliance and regulation impact on us dearly. They impact on either us getting our products to market and for the other products that come from further afield the cost of transportation being applied to the cost of the product. That is why I rise to speak about this bill today.

I note also that the previous version of this bill was introduced in the last parliament in November and referred to the then Transport and Local Government Committee. Additionally I note, as has been made abundantly clear by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and indeed many of the members who have spoken to the bill in this debate, this bill is essentially the same as the one that was considered by the committee from the 53rd Parliament. Noting that committee's previous wide and public consultation of the earlier bill, the current committee, the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, considered wisely that it would accept many of the previous submissions and also offered those submitters an opportunity to refresh their submissions. With new submissions, a total of 14 submissions were considered by that committee. I also note—I listened to at least the Friday, 2 August public hearing—the briefings given by TMR and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator project office as they briefed the committee on the bill. The actual process of national reform with respect to this legislation has been broad, consultative and in depth, the background of which has been more than adequately covered in the committee's report and by previous speakers during this debate.

I also note, perhaps surprisingly, that the legislation, both within the committee and during this debate, has enjoyed support right across the House. That support has been unqualified, and understandably so, because the intent of this legislation is twofold. It is to reconcile variations of state heavy vehicle laws that have been around for years and which have been a bugbear to business into a single unified approach applicable across all the states and territories and to establish the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to be responsible for the administration of those laws.

The national heavy vehicle law will replace no fewer than eight sets of laws that currently operate across the country. Our honourable minister, Scott Emerson, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, when he introduced the bill to the Assembly stated—

Queensland businesses will soon benefit from improved productivity and the ability to operate across state borders without the unnecessary burden of dealing with a range of regulators and regulatory interpretations across jurisdictions.

That speaks to our government's aim to reduce the burden on business brought on by red tape and regulation. That burden has hamstrung Queensland businesses for so long, adding a costly impost without any value. I also note the role that Queensland has played as the lead state in the formulation of this regulatory reform. Queensland was the host jurisdiction to lead the implementation of the national law and the NHVR. I note that the NHVR is being established in Queensland as the independent statutory body responsible for administering the national law and that the project office has been established in Brisbane.

The previous lack of a single administering body has left many Queensland interstate truckers with the complex task of navigating a plethora of government agencies to seek simple answers, or advice, or decisions on registration, accreditation, vehicle conditions and access. As a heavy combination qualified operator, I can assure the members of this House that it is hard enough to manoeuvre a heavily loaded rig safely without the added burden of the anxiety of doing something wrong and getting pulled over by the scales and having the confusion of multiple logbooks or multiple permits bouncing around in your cabin. This is particularly important—

Mr Rickuss: Did you use more than one logbook?

Mr HATHAWAY: We had a Defence logbook. This is particularly important for small operators and single-vehicle operators who, with extremely small margins on their businesses and also a high uncertainty of their return or their next outlay, simply do not have the staff to keep pace with the current mix of legislation.

The committee was made abundantly clear through submissions that any variations in legislation provides problems for interstate operators. No matter how small those distinctions in the regulations, they have compliance and enforcement consequences that can be catastrophic for a business with cross-border operations. To keep abreast of this compliance issue, we heard from NatRoad that the estimate of compliance is costing this country about 132,000 days of training or approximately \$17.8 million. Conversely, I note that the estimates of the benefit of this legislation across our country after full implementation are in the order of \$9 billion to \$12 billion across 20 years. So simply from a business benefit perspective and also from a red-tape regulation reduction perspective, this legislation simply makes good sense. On that note, it gives me great pleasure to support the legislation and recommend its favourable consideration by the House.