




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Heavy Vehicle Regulations

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (10.22 pm): I rise in the House to talk about driver fatigue laws. The rollout of the national laws has had some negative effects on a lot of operators in remote areas. This issue has been championed by Warren Bethel and Will Atwood from the Etheridge shire. At the LGAQ conference they moved a motion to amend these laws which was supported unanimously.

I refer to the drivers of particularly gravel trucks and water trucks. Because of monsoonal weather conditions, they get only one chance during the year to carry out works. A lot of contractors make a living off this work. It is something they have been managing well for years. To the best of our knowledge, there is no data to support the notion that fatigue has resulted in fatalities in remote areas in these types of vehicles. Gravel trucks or water trucks might be driving all day at 10 kilometres an hour. Under these laws it is mandatory that after nine days working there is five days rest, or after six days working there is one day rest, depending on which option is selected under the codes. If they opt for the five-day rest, operators who carry out their own maintenance are not allowed near the truck for five days. This makes it commercially unviable. It makes it more expensive for councils to operate. It makes it very difficult for these small contractors to operate. We are asking councils to do more with less. We need to revisit this issue and amend these laws as they apply to remote areas so that they can manage themselves—so that contractors can get in and do the work for the councils when it is dry. Taking five days off is just not feasible in these very remote areas.

A lot of the other heavy vehicle regulations may well work in larger companies in the city but are just unworkable in remote areas. There are now a number of checks that have to be carried out—checking all the tyres on a semi and so on. You cannot finish your checks before smoko! All this works out to more cost for council and reduced viability for contractors.

Through changes in policy a lot of savings can be made and better outcomes can be achieved. Once councils have more money—when they are not spending so much money complying with regulations—they will be able to spend more on what they should be spending on: roads, rubbish, water resources and so on. If government wants councils to do more with less, it should remove these regulations from remote areas. They do not work, they are impractical and there is no benefit from them in remote areas. They make no difference.