




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (8.12 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The Heavy Vehicle National Law is the cornerstone of the COAG national heavy vehicle reform agenda and ensures that the industry can operate across state borders without conflicting regulatory requirements. If you want a good example of a conflicting regulatory requirement, you need look no further than the livestock transport industry. Currently, we have the ludicrous situation where livestock transporters are required to offload cattle at the border because of differing mass limit regulations and a completely different system. That gives an understanding of how important it is to get consistency across the nation. In Queensland we have a system called volume loading, whereas in New South Wales, for example, they work on weight or mass limits. If I use a B-double as an example, that configuration will need to reduce its numbers by up to eight head of cattle if loading in Queensland and travelling across the border into New South Wales, in order to meet their GVM requirements. That equates to an enormous waste of money.

The Heavy Vehicle National Law regulates matters about the operation of heavy vehicles, such as mass and dimensions, vehicle safety standards, driver fatigue management, heavy vehicle accreditation, speed compliance and the use of intelligent transport systems. The Heavy Vehicle National Law also places obligations on identified off-road parties involved in the transport and logistics chain, and includes enforcement powers and administrative provisions. I am pleased that the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will implement reforms to better align the obligations of chain of responsibility parties, improve compliance and simplify enforcement.

I note that the \$100 million Industry Adjustment Assistance Package was announced to assist the taxi and limousine industry, following the announcement of reforms to the regulation of personalised transport services in Queensland. That amount will be vastly deficient in adequately compensating our taxi industry. I note that there is a proposed amendment to allow a regulation to provide financial assistance to certain operators within the taxi and limousine industry, in addition to holders of a taxi service licence or a limousine service licence. I use the example of my own electorate, where there are only a small number of taxis in towns such as Bowen, Ayr, Home Hill and other localities. This bill will have potential impacts on their livelihoods, as well as right across the taxi industry. There would not be a time when I come in from the airport to the Parliamentary Annexe and do not have a discussion with the taxidriver about the impacts that the bill will have on their livelihood and what it will mean for them.

The changes in the bill will address issues identified with the Heavy Vehicle National Law that create complexity and unnecessary compliance costs for industry. That is where it is inconsistent with the other national safety laws. The penalties are inadequate to address offending that results in death or serious injury. The duties on chain of responsibility parties are duplicated for different subject matters and there are inconsistencies in those duties. Having regard to the Heavy Vehicle National Law, the proposed reforms will contribute to improvements in safety outcomes in the road transport sector by requiring parties in the chain of responsibility and executive officers to focus on overall safety outcomes

and will enable parties to be more innovative in responding to safety concerns. I am pleased that section 26E(1) makes it an offence for a person to ask, direct or require a driver or a chain of responsibility party to do something that the person knows or ought reasonably to know would have the effect of causing the driver to exceed a speed limit, or to drive while fatigued or in breach of a work or rest hours requirement. In my former life as a police officer, I encountered numerous truck drivers who were forced to break the law by owners and agents in order to meet deadlines. In some cases, it was nothing short of dangerous and resulted in serious traffic accidents, simply in order to meet those deadlines.

I turn back to the taxi and limousine industry assistance package and the problems that have arisen when discussing compensation. As a country member, I know that if there is one issue that is polarising this industry it is that of compensation and the need for a level playing field. I know of operators who have paid upwards of \$500,000 for a taxi licence. To think that some of those owners will be offered a paltry \$20,000 in compensation is nothing short of disgraceful. There need to be changes to the number of compensation packages offered to taxi owners with multiple licences. If a taxi owner has outlaid a considerable sum of money on multiple taxi licences, he should not be discriminated against when it comes to compensation. A licence is a licence and compensation should be distributed on that basis. For too long in Queensland the taxi and limousine industry has been in turmoil over the arrival of Uber. A taxidriver said to me yesterday, 'All we want is a level playing field and fair compensation. Is that too much to ask?'