



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2017

**TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.26 pm): I rise to address the committee's Auditor-General report 20: 2015-16, *Heavy vehicle road access reforms*. It is important that we acknowledge this important report. We all experienced difficulties in the regions when the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was created in 2011. When we consider there were ambitious targets on savings as a result of these implications, the reality was that our farmers experienced many problems. Locally the main issue was delays on receiving permits. The implementation failed on the rollout of the access management systems and did not manage the inevitable risks that could come with that. We discovered early that the proposed one-stop shop to improve access was not effective and it denied stakeholders the full benefits of the law.

This report also identified what I have been saying since I was elected, which is that industry operators continue to face inconsistent processes and decisions for gaining a heavy vehicle permit. Our regional stakeholders remain concerned about the NHVR's ability to deliver access management efficiently and effectively and they now perceive that the pace of change and system rectification is too slow. We continue to hear that stakeholders believe there is insufficient communication.

I know that many welcome the Auditor-General's report and recommendations, as I do, but we need these changes to continue sooner rather than later. The NHVR must achieve the objectives outlined and remove the duplication of effort. Importantly, stakeholders must have confidence that the Department of Transport and Main Roads is committed to heavy vehicle reform.

While I am on my feet it gives me an opportunity to highlight some local success with the NHVR, namely, the Bundaberg Region Class 1 Agricultural Vehicle Dimension Exemption Notice that was received in 2015. An agricultural vehicle or combination that is wider than 3.5 metres and not wider than five metres operating on a minor road in the Bundaberg local government area can now operate under the Bundaberg Region Class 1 Agricultural Vehicle Dimension Exemption Notice. This was an important reform and we worked hard for the farmers across the Bundaberg region, who are now able to spend more time in the paddock and less time filling out paperwork thanks to the determination of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

We in the regions remember the work that led to the issuing of the Bundaberg region class 1 agricultural vehicle dimension exemption notice, authorising vehicles up to five metres to travel on minor roads across the Bundaberg region without having to apply for a special permit. It is important that there is no requirement to carry a copy of the notice in these heavy vehicles while making journeys. I note the involvement of the local and federal governments in gaining this exemption, showing what can be achieved if industry and governments work together. We know that this will enable the farmers in Bundaberg and Childers to get on with the job, cutting time-consuming red tape and helping businesses to be more productive, which is good for our local economy.

The Bundaberg region had local road conditions assessed by local government. This found that agricultural productivity could be enhanced by varying some of the requirements for oversized agricultural vehicles on our minor roads. Any potential risk to public safety was considered in the reforms. We know that notices have been very well received from the agriculture and transport sectors.

We welcome the Auditor-General's report. I note that the chair and the committee did good work. I note, though, that in the regions there are concerns with the national heavy vehicle reforms. There is more work to be done.