




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2018

**HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.40 pm): I am glad that I am speaking after the member for Condamine who, like me and a couple of other members in this House, has been involved with heavy vehicles all his life. Listening to what he had to say, it would be a very frightening and disturbing image in his mind and one that he probably still replays. Driving trucks is a very difficult thing to do sometimes. I have an MC licence which allows me to drive road trains. You can only slow those trucks down using the gears: you cannot slow them down using the brakes. If you use the brakes the truck will jackknife and you will end up in a worse situation.

I rise to make a short contribution on the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The LNP does not oppose the bill, as it seeks to introduce a range of measures which are designed to contribute to the improvement of safety outcomes not only for the road transport sector but also for all those who travel on our roads.

The seat of Gregory relies heavily on the vehicle industry. Heavy vehicles use our roads every day to get our products from paddock to port or paddock to processor. We have many well-respected companies in the seat of Gregory in the heavy vehicle industry including Emerald Carrying Co., one of the largest heavy vehicle operators in the nation transporting fuel across Queensland and the eastern states, and cattle industry heavy vehicle operators such as RTA and Ballard. They all play a significant role in our economy and provide opportunities for employment. The industry is certainly very well respected. It has many stringent regulations in relation to how they conduct their businesses and drive their machines interstate and intrastate.

We also acknowledge that while the road safety amendments increase penalties for driving offences involving death and grievous bodily harm, we hold the view there is still a gap. The member for Burdekin, as a former member of the police force for a number of years, has unfortunately been at the scene of many accidents, some involving deaths, and is familiar with the issue of ensuring that the correct offence is charged. As we said, there is still a gap in these types of offences. They do not go far enough in giving courts enough scope to apply the appropriate penalties in the circumstances.

While we are generally supportive of the bill, we note the importance of continual improvement in the regulatory environment for the industry and confirm the need for an independent review of the heavy vehicle national law to be undertaken within 12 months. It is important that we continue to review this. One of the biggest issues that I face in the seat of Gregory—and talking to people involved in the heavy vehicle industry—is getting to understand the regulation, whether that is the registration of trucks and trailers or abiding by the stringent controls over logbooks and having logbooks on them.

I have a logbook but I do not use it that much now. I just have a four-wheel drive to go around the electorate, not a Kenworth, but I do know the difficulty sometimes in filling out logbooks and ensuring they are accurate. I think that many drivers try to do the best they can to keep those logbooks as accurate as they can. If they are pulled over and the logbooks are not filled out correctly there are quite

exorbitant fines. I have heard of fines of more than a couple of thousand dollars, and for a family business in the heavy vehicle industry a large fine can be a big issue in terms of their viability. We need to acknowledge that, when it comes to regulation, the industry has come a long way over the last 20 or 30 years.

The Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 was introduced on 15 February 2018 and was referred to the Transport and Public Works Committee for detailed consideration. The bill makes minor or technical changes resulting from the maintenance process for the heavy vehicle national law that remove unnecessary administrative or regulatory burdens; provides a one-off exemption from vehicle registration duty for heavy vehicles transitioning from the Federal Interstate Registration Scheme to the Queensland registration scheme; and allows the registered operator of a vehicle to be notified of offences committed in their vehicle by another person.

With respect to heavy vehicle matters, we recognise that the HVNL amendments were jointly developed by the National Transport Commission and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in consultation with state and territory transport authorities, enforcement agencies and the Heavy Vehicle Industry Association. In May, as a result of these consultations the HVNL changes proposed in the bill were supported by all jurisdictions. It is also noted that, in conjunction with the proposed amendments of the HVNL registration, the Federal Interstate Registration Scheme will be closed and all registration functions will be maintained and administered by each state and territory based on the vehicle's garage address. However, while the responsibility for registering heavy vehicles will rest with the states and territories, the amendments in the bill will establish a national heavy vehicle database. As a major piece of legislation that applies on a broad basis, the heavy vehicle national law has been the subject of extensive discussion between agencies and governments of all persuasions over the years. Queensland has played an active role in the HVNL, with all sides of politics generally supportive of the measures and aims of the law.

It is also important that our other stakeholders are included in the communication to stakeholders. You only have to look at AgForce, the peak agriculture lobby group, and the need for them to be aware of these changes and how they can communicate this to their members. They have an effective database to get out to members and an understanding of how this affects heavy vehicle registration. There are many agricultural operations that have their own private heavy vehicles on farms or grazing properties, and there are many functions they have to undertake to run those businesses. They also need to have an ease of communication and understanding of what the changes are so they do not end up breaking the law and they are well aware of their obligations when they run a truck or road train into town or for work.

The LNP recognises the vital contribution that the heavy vehicle transport industry makes to the national economy and certainly to the Queensland economy. It has a significant impact on the Queensland economy and certainly the Western Queensland economy. Not only do they employ truck drivers but they also employ mechanics and tyre fitters. They also provide what is essentially the only way of getting our products from paddock to processor or paddock to port. Whether they are coming out of the Channel Country up through Tambo, across to Blackall and then across to Jericho and then into the Rockhampton meatworks, or even going further north on the Alpha-Clermont road up to Townsville, they are very much part of our industry. We also have to recognise that they are big supporters of our communities. Many of the trucking companies such as Johnson Brothers, RTA, Ballard and Emerald Carrying Co. play an active part in the community with sporting groups and organisations, so we have to make sure we make it easy for them to understand what laws we are changing.

We are not asking for special laws or to ease laws; we are asking for better communication in relation to those laws. Sometimes they are hard to understand and sometimes it takes time to get information through that people are doing the correct thing. As the member for Condamine said in his speech, there is a bit of a gap that needs to be addressed. I hope that when we look at this again in 12 months time we look at that gap and try to strengthen that part of the act.