




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.16 pm): If there is one seat in this House that relies on the trucking industry, it is certainly the seat of Gregory. The seat of Gregory, as many of you know, is 460,000 square kilometres and trucking is a big part of our industry. In terms of getting goods from Brisbane out to Windorah or Longreach, moving cattle or heavy machinery, or relying on the heavy vehicle industry for the mining industry, trucking is big business when it comes to regional Queensland.

Like the member for Callide, trucks have been in our lives a bit as well. Growing up in agriculture, trucking and using trucks has been a main part of being able to make a living. I was a little bit jealous when the shadow minister went for a ride in the member for Callide's Super-Liner, because I have a 1974 White Road Boss with a joey box waiting for you in Gregory. It is not as comfortable as the Mack Super-Liner, I can tell you that now, and the air conditioner does not work as well. I will get you out there in December in the 40-degree heat. We will go and find some roads and we will take you around.

Mr Last: I take the interjection.

Mr MILLAR: I am happy to help. I encourage all members of this parliament to catch up with a truck driver and go for a bit of a trip with them if they get the opportunity. Members would get to understand how difficult it can be on some of these roads with the time constraints they have. The trucking industry is one of those industries which is held up by red tape and continual ongoing reforms. Many people are just trying to make a living running a family business. You have to understand that these trucks are very expensive pieces of machinery and they need to meet their repayments when they take out a loan. A lot of these truck drivers, men and women, are spending a lot of time away from their families travelling around Queensland and the nation.

This bill is part of the ongoing changes under the national heavy vehicle reform agenda, which will see heavy transport regulations align with most states. This has the widespread support of the industry because it is intended to improve the efficiency and safety of road freight transportation, which is very important. This is a vital industry for Queensland, especially the seat of Gregory. Under the Labor government we are seeing a statewide rail fail, and that rail fail also included the cattle industry. We saw cattle crates decommissioned for nearly eight months last year and they only got back on the rail just recently. It was the heavy vehicle road fleet—the truck drivers and the cattle transporters—in the seat of Gregory who were forced to take up the slack to try and get these cattle down to meatworks at Dinmore or across to Rocky.

I support the intentions of the bill in reducing the complexity of the heavy vehicle national regulations as they apply in Queensland and in streamlining the court processes for the prosecution of fatigue related offences.

I am very aware that many heavy transport operators feel that since the reforms commenced in 2014 they have been living with constant change. This has been very challenging to them, because many are just small businesses operating in an environment where there are logistical deadlines. Failing to meet delivery deadlines comes with real costs for both the transporter and the recipient. It is this aspect of the work that can create real risk for drivers.

This bill will streamline the processes for the prosecution of fatigue related offences. While this should be seen as a positive, I stress that it is vital that there is a timely review of how this is working for the industry, for the Queensland businesses reliant on road freight services and, of course, for the compliance officers themselves. Indeed, given the extended and constant adjustment of the legislative environment for heavy vehicle operators over the last few years, I think it is essential that we have an independent review of all of the HVNL within the next 12 months. This will allow operators to give valuable, on-the-ground feedback about the impacts of the changes. Getting feedback from them is important, because they live with this day by day.

Operators can tell you the challenges of complying with the changes, as can I. I have a logbook which is very thick. There are many requirements associated with that logbook—filling it out, constantly being on top of it and making sure you are not making mistakes. I have heard stories of people being fined for spelling mistakes in their logbooks.

Mr Costigan: Trivial stuff.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. It is trivial. They are being fined for little mistakes in their logbooks when they are trying to get what they have on the back of their truck to the destination in a timely manner, making sure they are meeting all of the requirements when it comes to the hours they are allowed to be on the road, taking rest stops and then trying to get home to be part of a family environment after that. We have to make it easier for these truck drivers, because they are only human. They should not continue to feel that they are wrapped up in boundless red tape and facing compliance breaches for little mistakes. We have to get that valuable feedback. They will give that valuable feedback. For an industry so fundamental to Queensland's productivity and so necessary to the daily lives of all Queenslanders, this is something the minister should make a firm commitment to.

I am pleased to note that, while Western Australia and the Northern Territory do not participate in the national heavy vehicle reforms, they have been extensively consulted. This is important, because many road freight operators in the seat of Gregory operate across those borders. We have trucks going into the Northern Territory and all the way over to Western Australia.

I am also pleased to see that the legislation will move the enforceable load restraint performance standards from the Load Restraint Guide to the HVNL. This change will not only improve road safety but also clarify the restraint obligations for loads carried on heavy vehicles. By increasing the allowed volume of certain heavy vehicles where mass is not a constraint, the legislation should improve the productivity of the road network and the freight fleet.

I acknowledge some great operators in the electorates of Gregory and Burdekin and throughout regional Queensland. In Clermont, which used to be in the electorate of Gregory, is Straw Jones, a major transport operator. Lyn Jones, her husband and their family do a great job in moving cattle right throughout regional Queensland. I also mention Duggan Transport and Ballard Transport. I also mention the Johnson family. The family of the former member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, was heavily involved in road transport and moving cattle right around this state. Family members of the Johnsons continue to do that. Gidgee and others do a great job in getting cattle from our country in to the meatworks.

Of course, the Emerald Carrying Co has one of the biggest fleets in the nation and is a successful Central Highlands business. It moves not only freight but also a lot of fuel right around this nation to make sure we can continue our productivity. It does a great job. If you want to see a topnotch operation—how to do everything right and how to have the shiniest trucks—you only have to go to the Emerald Carrying Co and see what it does. There is also Curley Cattle Transport, RTA, Frasers Livestock Transport and many more.

I make one final comment that does relate to the bill as it concerns fatigue. We are putting in place rest stops, where trucks can pull off the road and drivers can have their breaks. We have to make sure they are designated as 'trucks only'. We do want tourists in our region, but we are finding that more and more grey nomads are using truck stops as a place to rest. The truck stops are designed for the drivers of type 1 and type 2 road trains to have a place to have their required rest, which is under compliance. I congratulate the minister on the provision of the truck stops, which are very important, but I ask him to look at putting up some signs to the effect that those areas are for trucks only. I like the Winnebagos and the grey nomads coming to our area, but there are caravan parks and other places they can park.

When you have to cross-load—a truck comes down from Clermont and cross-loads cattle to go to Rockhampton because of fatigue issues or because they have run out of time and they need another truck—you have to line those trucks up dead straight to make it safe to load the cattle across and continue to their destination. It may be as simple as 'These rest areas are for trucks only. Please park

at the caravan park' or down at the river. I congratulate the minister on the provision of the truck stop at Peak Downs, at Emerald, but we are finding a lot of Winnebagos turning up so it is important to put up a sign that says 'trucks only'. This is about fatigue management.