




Speech By
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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.30 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill. Obviously trucks and Toowoomba are synonymous. Toowoomba has been a hub for heavy vehicle movement as the wealth of Queensland has been carried to the port, starting with bullock carts through to today's big trucks and heavy vehicles. Ensuring that we can improve the effectiveness and the ability to be able to investigate and enforce the regulations surrounding our heavy vehicles is very important, and the people of Toowoomba understand this because there are 3,500 to 5,000 heavy vehicles thundering down James Street every day. Therefore, ensuring that the regulation is in place to make sure that that is safe for our community is very important.

However, we know that because of that volume of heavy vehicles moving through the centre of town the LNP funded and got the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing up and underway. This will make a fundamental difference to heavy vehicles for those complying with the time requirements as it will reduce their travel time because they will no longer be stuck in traffic going through Toowoomba because of this wonderful piece of infrastructure and it will increase the distance and reach of their vehicles. It is a bit of a shame that this piece of infrastructure is currently behind schedule. There is some hope that in March heavy vehicles, which this legislation affects, will be able to start going down that new road, but I am hearing disturbing commentary around the slip that they are faced with at one of the cuttings and how long that might take to fix. In the long term that critical piece of infrastructure that the state and federal LNP governments committed to will make a difference logistically for many people.

This bill is about trying to improve efficiency and ensuring that compliance is consistent, and that is fantastic because we know that the logistics movements in Australia and in Queensland add to the cost of business. Whether it is export, whether it is import, whether it is interstate or whether it is intrastate, the simple fact is that Queensland is a big place and heavy vehicles move a lot of our produce around. Every time a heavy vehicle has an extra cost associated with its movement, it puts the price of everything up. I certainly am very happy that this legislation will reduce some of the compliance and complexity that heavy vehicle operators face. I am also pleased with this legislation from a safety point of view. This legislation is very important, but it is also important to ensure that we have the appropriate infrastructure that enables these heavy vehicles to operate effectively and efficiently.

The member for Gregory talked about having appropriate stops for drivers to be able to get their required rest. We also need to ensure that we have roads that are designed and built to be able to carry these kinds of heavy vehicles. The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing will be a great example of that and will make a big difference to the people not only in my part of the world but also further afield. Whether you are moving from Melbourne and getting caught up coming through Toowoomba, whether you are heading to the Northern Territory or whether you have come from Western Queensland, it will make a big difference.

This legislation is good legislation. I am pleased that we are the lead jurisdiction in doing this as Queensland is obviously very dependent on the heavy vehicle industry to get all of our produce to the port, so our wealth is linked. It is important that we do lead the way in ensuring that we have appropriate

legislation to keep things efficient and safe on our roads. It is important that we also review this on a regular basis, because we know that technically—using electronics and advancements in technology—the space around this is moving very fast. Ensuring that we have not just nation-leading good practice around heavy vehicle management but world-leading good practice around heavy vehicle management in Queensland is something that everybody would support. We want it to be efficient. We want it to be effective. We want it to have the right infrastructure in place. We want to have the right legislation so people can get on and operate their businesses without jumping through unnecessary hoops and difficulties as they move across state borders.

This legislation has lots of good positives, but we should ensure that as technology changes and as opportunities come our way to update and improve our practices around road movement and heavy vehicles we keep abreast so we are the world leaders in that space. From my perspective, I am very happy to see this legislation come through the House. I will be very pleased to see heavy vehicles under this bill operating and travelling through Toowoomba. I will be far more pleased when they are travelling around Toowoomba using the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing.

The last comment I want to make about compliance of heavy vehicles is that whilst there are great companies and operators in Queensland there are still a few rogue operators—I would like to suggest that they are all from interstate, but they might not be—currently using the Toowoomba range crossing. If you stand there with a dB meter some of those operators are way in excess of the legal noise limits that are currently allowed under legislation. I have been drumming on about this for some time and we have not seen any great enforcement of the noise restrictions. I am not sure that 'restrictions' is the right term, but trucks are supposed to operate at a certain level across Queensland. When some of them go down the range crossing, anybody with a dB meter can hear that some trucks—not many but some—are not operating to the noise standard they should be because they have been altered. That is a regulation that many people on the escarpment in Toowoomba would very much appreciate being enforced by the transport department.

With those few words, I will be supporting this bill. Our industry is a wonderful industry that should continue to be effective, efficient, safe and well supported by this House because the things they move are what make our lives liveable in regional Queensland and also create a lot of wealth for our state.