




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2019

### HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.28 pm): I am absolutely proud of the previous member's performance in understanding our trucking industry and I would absolutely suggest that the member should head to the department of transport and get an MC licence, a multicomination licence. I think the trucking industry would love someone like you involved in the industry because of your understanding, your passion for it—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Comments through the chair please, member for Gregory.

**Mr MILLAR:** We need more people like that involved in the trucking industry. I am more than happy to talk to the member to help her get her MC licence and guide her through that transition in the trucking industry.

This bill is part of ongoing changes under the national heavy vehicle reform agenda, which will see heavy transport regulations aligned in most states. This agenda has widespread support in the industry, because it is intended to improve the efficiency and safety of road freight transport. This legislation is vital for Queensland and it is especially vital in my seat of Gregory. Under this Labor government, the people in my electorate are struggling with the lack of rail freight services and the heavy vehicle road fleet is being forced to take up the slack. I support the intentions of this bill in clarifying the complexities of the heavy vehicle national regulations as they apply in Queensland. That should reduce the administrative and regulatory burden on both the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the heavy vehicle industry.

One of the bill's policy objectives is to increase the allowed volume on certain heavy vehicles where mass is not the constraint. That is achieved by amendments providing for specified semitrailers to operate at 4.6 metres high under the legislation without the need for a notice or an individual permit. That is incredibly important. Hopefully, this amendment will result in increased productivity for the industry and our freight network, which is the foundation of life in regional, rural and remote Queensland.

In my area, people are price takers, not price makers. In my area, everything people produce agriculturally has to make its way to our markets from their farm gate. That cost directly affects their competitiveness. Conversely, even daily necessities, from fuel to toothpaste, must be transported to communities in my electorate. The heavy vehicle industry keeps rural Queensland operating. To give members an example, for the people of Quilpie to be able to get their fresh fruit and grocery supplies, they rely on the trucking industry. A truck comes into Quilpie on a Wednesday and a truck comes in on a Friday. One of the most important issues is that, when a truck is late and it does not turn up on the Wednesday, that has an impact on the Quilpie community—not only on people in town but also on people who are outside of town. My area needs to have a reliable transport industry.

While speaking in support of this bill, I am very aware that, since the reforms commenced in 2014, many heavy transport operators feel that they have been living with constant change. This process has been very challenging, because many truck drivers are small businesses operating in an

environment where there are logistical deadlines. As I mentioned, failing to meet delivery deadlines comes at a real cost for both the transporter and the recipient. It is this aspect of the trucking industry that can create a real risk for drivers.

This bill will streamline the administrative process. I hope that will lighten the burden on the industry. Although this legislation should be seen as a positive, I would like to stress that it is vital that there be a timely review of how it is working for the industry, for those Queensland businesses that are reliant on road freight services and compliance officers. Indeed, given the extent and constant adjustments of the legislative environment for heavy vehicle operators over the past few years, I think it is essential that we have an independent review of all of the HVNL. I have been calling for that for some time now. That will allow operators to give valuable on-the-ground feedback about the impacts of the changes. For an industry that is so fundamental to Queensland's productivity and so necessary to the daily lives of all Queenslanders, this is something that the minister should make a firm commitment to.

I am pleased to note that, although Western Australia and the Northern Territory do not participate in the national heavy vehicle reforms, they have been extensively consulted. That is important, because many road freight operators in the Gregory electorate operate across those states' borders. I would like to think that moving to national standards would make it easier for these operators to move seamlessly between jurisdictions.

Finally, I would like to touch on something that I continue to talk about. We need to continue our road improvement and maintenance program across regional Queensland. That backlog of \$9 billion over the forward estimates is far too much. That \$9 billion backlog of road maintenance means that we need to fix these roads now. We need to have these roads connected. We need to make sure that those roads are safe for our operators.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Fascinating and as inaccurate as the member's contribution is, it is not related in any way to this bill.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! While I am taking a point of order I do not need members arguing across the chamber. Member for Gregory, I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr MILLAR:** We need to make sure that not only do we have in place the right regulations for our heavy vehicle transport operators—whether they are moving cattle, food or groceries—but also we have road maintenance in place. That needs to be put together. While we make sure that we put in place the legislative reforms, we also need to make sure that we have road safety. Road safety means making sure that our roads are safe. I point out to the minister that that is what I meant. We can have regulatory reform. That is great. That is fantastic. We need to continue this regulatory reform. Road safety also goes to the maintenance of roads. When we have a backlog of \$9 billion, it means that road safety is a problem.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Gregory, you have made a valiant effort, but that particular aspect that you are talking about is not part of the long title of the bill. I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr MILLAR:** Regulatory reform is important. I know how hard that is for small business operators, such as our trucking industry. Like the member for Callide, I also have a logbook and an MC licence. I also understand the complexities of filling out that logbook. It entails a lot of time and effort by those operators. They try to do the right thing. They are not only trying to drive the truck safely, trying to get the goods delivered on time but also meeting their regulatory reforms in terms of the paperwork. I call on the minister to consider the scrutiny that is given to logbooks. Sometimes those logbooks can be a bit difficult for truck drivers, who are trying to meet deadlines. They are doing the right thing. If a spelling mistake in a logbook requires a fine, I sometimes wonder why that is. These truck drivers are just trying to do the right thing. There have been instances where people have been fined because the logbooks have not been filled out correctly. I think we need a bit of leniency for our small business operators as we move forward to try to keep Queensland moving.