



Speech By  
**Adam Baillie**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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## **HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Second Reading**

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset I would like to congratulate the minister and his team for leading this legislation at the national level. I also thank the committee, which is ably led by the chair, the member for Lockyer, who is a good friend of mine. The committee made one recommendation: that the bill be passed.

This bill is about something pretty simple: keeping our roads safe, keeping our economy moving and making life easier for the men and women who drive our freight across Queensland every single day. For Townsville and North Queensland, trucking is not just another industry; it is essential for our economy. It is how food gets to our supermarket shelves, how our tools and supplies get to retailers, how our mining and defence gear gets to where it needs to go and how thousands of North Queenslanders earn a crust to put food on their table for their own family.

Last week I was out at the Bohle industrial precinct. I note that our candidate for Hinchinbrook, Wayne Chiesa, has done a body of work in advocating for some upgrades around the top of Shaw Road and Woolcock Road into Ingham Road, and I support him in that advocacy. It would mean a great deal to our electorate as well as the electorate of Hinchinbrook. I was also at the Port of Townsville last week. While I was at both locations, I witnessed many trucks coming in from out west and down south. A couple of weeks ago I visited the team from Sizer & Cogill at a grain-handling yard just south of the port which was involved in seeing the first bulk grain vessel depart from the Townsville port. All of the chickpeas in this instance were delivered to the facility by truck, stockpiled and then delivered to the port via more trucks.

Earlier this year we had a significant rain event up north and several roads were cut and impacted by the rain. We saw firsthand what happens when roads are cut and trucks stop. When trucks stop, North Queensland stops and the consequences for families, small businesses and communities in our region are immediate and pretty severe. I remember the vision shortly after the roads reopened of the trucks going through towns like Ingham and Cardwell and heading north to Cairns. It raised the spirits of the community, as those critical supplies were able to once again be delivered by road.

This bill modernises the Heavy Vehicle National Law. Queensland as the host jurisdiction has to lead the way, and that is exactly what the LNP government is doing. This bill improves safety, cuts red tape and makes our transport industry more productive and reliable. One of the most important reforms is the new duty to not drive while unfit. Some people hear that and think about how many notches on the belt buckle they might get or think it might be just about fatigue, but it is a broader and more realistic approach. It is about drivers making the call when they are unwell, when they are adversely affected by medication or when they just feel it would be unsafe for them to control a heavy vehicle.

This new duty covers all drivers of heavy vehicles over 4½ tonnes. The previous duty applied only to drivers of fatigue regulated heavy vehicles, which are vehicles over 12 tonnes. This means better safety for every road user, be it a mum getting the children to school, a dad on his way to work, a daughter on her way to a sports program or a family during school holidays going on a road trip, as I hope to do later this year. It also offers more consistency for drivers and operators. Importantly, it gives drivers protection. If an employer pressures a driver to operate a vehicle when they know they are not fit to drive, the driver can report it to the heavy vehicle regulator's confidential reporting hotline.

The bill strengthens the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme by requiring operators who choose to participate to have a proper safety management system in place. This is not just paperwork; it is a scalable, practical system that identifies risks and puts controls in place. While I am talking about safety, I want to acknowledge the changes to the enforcement of the fatigue management system. Anyone who has spoken to a truckie knows the frustration they experience when they try to do the right thing but forget to tick a box or write the day of the week in their work diary. This bill improves the way minor and administrative fatigue related breaches are managed. Minor errors that have no impact on safety can now be dealt with through warnings.

A number of requirements for work diaries have changed to make it easier for drivers to comply, including removing offences for failing to record the day of the week or total work and rest hours on the daily sheet in their work diary. In addition, a standard hours default option has been established so drivers are not penalised for forgetting to mark an hours option in their diary. If a lost written work diary turns up after it has been reported lost and a replacement issued, the lost diary does not have to be returned. This is the kind of practical, on-the-ground reform our transport industry has been calling for.

At the same time, this bill increases penalties for serious offences. I think this is a balanced approach. It certainly adds deterrents for genuinely dangerous behaviour, not just box-ticking mistakes. These changes were developed transparently with all participating state transport agencies, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, state policing agencies, major heavy vehicle transport associations and industry, with a further review and evaluation planned in three years to assess the program's effectiveness.

Earlier today I asked a question of the minister regarding manufacturing in Townsville. He highlighted some of the progress the industry in Townsville is making, but it is industries like manufacturing, mining, defence and agriculture that depend on reliable road freight. Every day dozens of road trains and semitrailers move in and out of Townsville, hauling everything from fuel to fresh produce, mining machinery and construction materials. If those trucks stop, supermarket shelves will empty, construction sites will grind to a halt, our port will lose productivity, small businesses will feel the pinch immediately and our communities will suffer shortages.

North Queensland relies on trucking more than almost any other part of the country. For locals working in the transport industry, these reforms matter. They reduce hassles and red tape. They make rules clearer. They reward operators who invest in safety and ensure those who cut corners are held accountable. There is a win for every truck driver, every freight business and every family in Townsville who depend on a strong and safe supply chain.

This bill ensures safer roads, better support for drivers, less red tape, modern regulation, stronger oversight and a productivity boost across the entire network. It gives the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator the flexibility it needs to evolve with industry while ensuring ministers keep strong oversight where public safety is at stake. This is a practical, commonsense reform that makes our freight sector do what it does best and continue to deliver for Queensland. I commend this bill to the House.