



Speech By
Glen Kelly

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr G KELLY** (Mirani—LNP) (8.25 pm): I rise to talk on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill. The electorate of Mirani is reliant on roads, so it should come as no surprise that road safety and ensuring that people get home safely at the end of the day is one of my top priorities. In my electorate of Mirani we have over 400 kilometres of the Bruce Highway, not to mention thousands of kilometres of other arterial freight roads. Those roads carry a lot of goods such as livestock and grains as well as large and small machinery such as mining gear, so we are no strangers to seeing big movers on our roads. They form an essential part of our economy by ensuring that people can get the things they need and that farmers can get their products to market to feed our state.

I know what it is like to sit behind the wheel of a prime mover or a small truck, so I know all too well the risks that come with handling a vehicle that has a lot of weight in it or on it. This bill will help improve safety and productivity, remove the burden of regulatory red tape on our truck drivers, improve regulatory functions and simplify the administration of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act. We lose too many lives on our roads because of fatigue. We need to make sure that the guidelines that are in place are easy to understand and follow for our hardworking truckies, while also ensuring safe driving practices.

By streamlining the regulatory burden, we are making it easier for drivers to comply with safety standards. By creating more flexibility for operators to demonstrate compliance with the prescribed requirements around fatigue management work and rest hours or general mass limits, we are making it easier for operators to ensure their safety. To do this, the bill will require operators to implement the safety management scheme that is scalable to their organisation. This will be subject to audits and is a new core accreditation requirement that will underpin both general safety accreditation and alternative compliance accreditation under the national law. By providing for ultimate compliance accreditation, we will be supporting operators with the flexibility to apply different and innovative methods for complying with the obligations rather than boxing them into methods that may not suit the particular requirements of their operation. Operators will be required to identify and address any public risks that are associated with their activities as part of their safety management system.

By creating a proactive approach, operators will have to think about the risks in their operations and prepare for and address those risks, rather than operating reactively when something happens. By thinking of the risks associated with their work, they are able to put plans in place to mitigate the risks to their drivers and take driver safety seriously. This will ensure that operators will not be running on a hodgepodge set of rules that have been developed in an ad hoc way but rather have been thought about and built on as part of their operational necessities.

This bill will introduce a new duty of fit to drive which will expand on the existing obligation for drivers not to drive while impaired by fatigue. This new duty will apply to all drivers of heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, not just those operating fatigue regulated vehicles over 12 tonnes. We have to remember that even smaller trucks can present a lot of danger. This is important because one of the

biggest killers on our roads is fatigue. By placing an additional obligation on more drivers to monitor their fatigue we will help reduce the toll on our roads.

Driving through my electorate, I am often driving for long hours and often in the evening or early morning and I know how quickly fatigue can hit and how it can impact your concentration. All it takes is to lose concentration for a second for everything to go wrong. My hat goes off to those who drive these trucks day or night because it is not easy. We need to make sure drivers are managing their fatigue because we do not want them to be a risk to themselves or other people on the roads. People will be all right if their delivery is a little late because the driver has made sure they are safe. It is better to be late than not make it at all.

I would like to think that everybody in this chamber takes the safety of our truck drivers seriously. I hope to see those on the other side who are affiliated with our transport workers support this bill to help ensure the safety of our drivers. That is why members can imagine my surprise when I went to look at the submissions to the inquiry on this bill and there was none from the organisation that is meant to stand up for our road freight workers. Unfortunately, the Transport Workers Union did not make a submission to the inquiry on this bill. This was a surprise to me. They are a union that is normally pretty on top of worker safety, so it was disappointing not to have had their feedback on how this bill is going to help improve safety for our truck drivers. Maybe it is because they did not want to admit that we are doing the right thing by both the drivers and operators? Those opposite might be able to shed some light on this in their contributions. The TWU has traditionally been at the forefront of safety for our truckies.

Luckily, we did have other stakeholders provide evidence to the inquiry. They were generally supportive of the reforms we are debating tonight. We do not want people to lose their lives while just doing their jobs. We do not want people to have their jobs put at risk because they do not want to risk their own lives because they were not fit to drive. This is why having clear, easy to follow requirements, with the flexibility to accommodate different conditions for different operators, is important to ensure the efficiency of our heavy vehicle transport sector. We are a big state and conditions are different for truckies operating in the south-east corner with relatively good roads and shorter distances to those in my patch who have to spend their time dodging potholes and driving hours on end between towns.

These reforms are important because the more red tape, the more the cost and the more mums and dads at home see it in all their purchases. More costs flow onto the grocery bills of our uni students living out of home who are already struggling to pay their bills. We understand the importance of getting the framework right to ensure the safety of our drivers, but it has to be without creating more unnecessary regulatory burden that pushes up prices without improving safety. Adequate safety standards are not only important for truck drivers but also for everybody they are sharing the road with. That is why I am proud to stand up today and support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.