



Speech By  
**John Barounis**


**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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

### **Second Reading**

 **Mr BAROUNIS** (Maryborough—LNP) (12.38 pm): I rise today to speak on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025. This bill will make the Heavy Vehicle National Law simpler and more flexible by shifting a range of prescriptive requirements into regulations. In doing so, it will make it easier for the heavy vehicle industry to understand and comply with its obligations. These amendments will have a strong focus on safety. This bill includes a new duty for drivers to not drive while unfit and an enhanced accreditation scheme built on core safety management system requirements. These amendments enhance ministerial direction and approval powers. They also increase National Heavy Vehicle Regulator accountability for accreditation options, operational documents and codes of practice.

Rather than relying solely on prescriptive requirements fixed in the law, the amendments support a risk-based regulatory approach that gives the regulator greater discretion to respond to future challenges and industry needs, leading to improvements in productivity and road safety. These amendments strengthen compliance and enforcement measures to ensure adherence to safety standards and to deter breaches of the law. The penalty amounts have been updated following a comprehensive penalty review to ensure they are proportionate to risks. Extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including industry representatives and regulatory bodies, resulted in broad support for the proposed amendments.

A driver of a heavy vehicle is unfit to drive the heavy vehicle on a road if the driver is not of good health or fitness to drive the heavy vehicle safely. This bill expands the duty to not drive while fatigued to include a duty not to drive when unfit. Some examples of being unfit to drive include where a person is affected by alcohol or drugs or the driver feels unwell and believes they are incapable of driving the heavy vehicle safely. This new duty covers all drivers of heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes. The previous duty applied only to drivers of fatigue regulated heavy vehicles, which are vehicles over 12 tonnes. There will be no change to fatigue management work and rest limits and work diary requirements. These continue to apply to drivers of vehicles over 12 tonnes.

These laws will be enforced jointly by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator through its authorised officers and by police agencies in participating jurisdictions. Any truck drivers who feel pressured to drive by their employer when they consider that they are unfit to drive can report this to the regulator's Heavy Vehicle Confidential Reporting Line. The regulator will provide guidance to drivers and operators to support compliance and will ensure its officers are fully trained and capable of enforcing the duty.

The National Transport Commission reviewed the penalties in the national law using an objective assessment against set criteria. This review aims to strike a balance between compliance, enforcement and taking a fair and reasonable approach towards minor, administrative and technical breaches. The review aimed to enhance road safety by ensuring any penalty increases were proportionate to the

nature of the offences and appropriate for deterrence. The National Transport Commission consulted with all participating state transport agencies, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, state policing agencies, major heavy vehicle transport associations and the industry.

Operators seeking accreditation must implement an SMS that identifies and addresses public risks associated with the operator's transport activities and specifies the controls to mitigate those risks. Alternative compliance options will provide flexible pathways for complying with prescribed operations requirements in the national law such as the fatigue management work and rest hours. An operator's SMS will need to demonstrate, through independent audit, that it complies with an SMS standard approved by ministers before the operator can be granted accreditation.

This bill will also allow for an audit of an accredited operator's SMS to be used as evidence by a court in a primary duty prosecution. Existing accreditations will continue until they expire or until the maximum transition period of three years concludes. The regulator must comply with these ministerial directions and will be required to publish any direction on its website and in its annual report. The new national audit standard will outline requirements for accreditation audits under the new general safety and alternative compliance accreditation and the independent auditors who conduct them.

My electorate of Maryborough is home to a significant number of businesses that rely heavily on the trucking industry—from Richers Transport, which provides transport services across Queensland, to Hyne Timber, which depends on logging trucks to move its products, and of course the sugar industry. All of these heavy vehicles play a vital role in connecting my community with key industries. These truck drivers work long and demanding hours because, as we all know, the trucking industry does not operate on a Monday-to-Friday, nine-to-five schedule. My electorate is situated along the Bruce Highway and heavy vehicles make constant use of this major transport corridor linking the south to the north of our state.

The Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025 will be welcome news to the thousands of truck drivers who use our roads to keep our nation moving. The truck drivers within the Maryborough electorate welcome any legislation that protects them and keeps them safe. They are part of one of the most essential industries in Queensland—an industry that must be supported and safeguarded if we are to keep our state running smoothly. I want to thank the honourable minister, his team and the Crisafulli LNP government for the work they are putting in with regard to this bill. I welcome the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025 and commend it to the House.