




Speech By

Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 30 October 2025

HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.06 pm): I rise to speak this evening on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025. I was the previous chair of the transport committee for many years and I concur with the current chair that reviewing the Heavy Vehicle National Law is a fun time, and no-one should dare put it down because we love it; don't we, Chair?

Mr McDonald: We love it.

Mr KING: We do. I will start by summarising what the bill does. It brings in a requirement for heavy vehicle operators to have a safety management system—SMS—in Queensland. It is recommended at the national level, but it has not been a legal requirement for accreditation here until now. An SMS will include a risk assessment and an outline of how risks will be monitored and controlled. It might also include safety training, communication, performance monitoring and reporting, among other things, all to keep our truck drivers and other road users safe.

The bill also introduces a duty to be fit to drive, to complement the existing duty not to drive fatigued. Currently, the dual duties apply to drivers of heavy vehicles over 12 tonnes. The bill extends that requirement to all heavy vehicle drivers. The bill simplifies the process to make new codes of practice, reducing double handling by shifting responsibility for development and approval to the national regulator.

The bill legislates new ministerial direction and approval powers in response to other changes that balance regulatory discretion and ministerial oversight, along with changes to governance arrangements to modernise the operation of the regulator board and allow responsible ministers to approve a statement of expectations for the regulator. The bill introduces new measures to make fatigue or impairment management record keeping easier and enables applications for alternative compliance accreditation where operators can prove they are doing things a little bit differently without compromising driver or road safety. Finally, the bill amends some offence penalty amounts to be more proportionate to outcomes and moves some functions of the existing act into the regulations to improve flexibility when administrative or descriptive changes are required.

For the benefit of anyone not familiar with heavy vehicles—and I think the minister raised it before—they are defined as having a gross mass of over 4½ tonnes. We are talking about semitrailers, big freight trucks, road trains, buses, vehicle carriers, livestock vehicles and mobile cranes. Anyone driving those vehicles comes under these rules.

We have a lot of heavy vehicles on local roads out my way, with a huge amount of housing development going on. I will digress a bit to say that most of that housing work was started under the former state Labor government. I know that the LNP likes to say, 'There's a new house,' but Queenslanders are smarter than that. Anyone who has built a house, especially since COVID, knows it takes more than a year. The availability of workers and resources, which are often transported to development sites by heavy vehicles, is a big part of that. I thank our heavy vehicle drivers and our truckies for the essential work they do. I will not use the same slogan the chair used, but I do endorse it. They work very hard in the pipeline of delivering more homes for Queenslanders.

I also give a shout-out to all our bus drivers. I have the headquarters of Kangaroo Bus Lines, owned by the Webster family, at Burpengary in my electorate. I have had the pleasure of visiting there many times to see the work they do, particularly when we rolled out the tap-and-go technology for credit cards and phones on buses and in the development of electric buses. I also have Thompson Bus Services in the south of my electorate, based in Joyner.

Being part of the committee that examined this legislation, I heard from a large range of stakeholders during the inquiry, from peak transport industry organisations to members of the public. I thank our parliamentary committee team for the usual exemplary work they do. It is always excellent, so thank you. I thank everyone who shared their experiences with us and I thank the committee members.

I note the contributions from regional operators about the unique challenges drivers face in North Queensland and in remote and regional parts of our state. The chair mentioned a couple. One that resonated with me is that under fatigue laws you have to stop after a certain time. They said that on some of those dirt roads out west and long roads in the north you can be just half an hour or an hour from your depot, yet you have to take a break when you are that close. We took the need for flexibility on board. That is the sort of thing they work on to make it easier and safer for our truck drivers.

The amendments put forward in this bill were recommended by the National Transport Commission in consultation with other states and territories. For a national law and a national regulator to work, there cannot be inconsistencies with state laws. These amendments enable the national regulator to do more of the job that it was set up to do, prioritising road safety not just in Queensland but across the country. Our committee recommended that the bill be passed and I will be supporting its passage.