

**GEOFF CROUCH
ATA CHAIR**

**CLOSING SPEECH
30th ANNIVERSARY DINNER
CANBERRA, 19 NOVEMBER 2019**

- Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack
- Assistant Minister Scott Buchholz
- Past chairs and leaders of the ATA
- ATA sponsors, and in particular our Foundation Sponsors and their representatives that are here this evening: Martin Merrick from Volvo Group Australia; Tony Clark from National Transport Insurance; and Michael Hart from BP Australia.

Ladies and gentlemen..... this truly has been a wonderful night of memories, as we celebrate thirty years of hard work and achievement for our ATA, our Australian Trucking Association.

Firstly may I thank and pay tribute to the past ATA Chairs who have shared their incredible experiences and memories with us tonight.

Denis Robertson, Ron Finemore and Bruce McIver: you gentlemen.....together with the late **Peter Roche**.....set the ATA on its path to where it is today.

Our first safety education trailer.....our first advertising campaign..... and the TruckSafe safety accreditation program. Three pivotal initiatives that remain at the very heart of who we are today.....and are just as relevant now as they were in the beginning.

Ross Fraser and Kathy Williams: together with **Mike Almond and Trevor Martyn**, you led the ATA through its second decade.

You built the ATA building and achieved historic wins on tax issues, such as the GST, fuel tax and depreciation allowances. It is impossible to imagine where the trucking industry would be today if you hadn't fought so hard with government on just these three issues alone.

It would be equally as difficult to imagine where the ATA would be now, and into the future, without the foresight you had in committing to 25 National Circuit and ensuring that our industry and our member associations had a solid financial future.

David Simon and Noelene Watson: you led the ATA into its third decade which saw the creation of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the industry's victorious campaign against price fixing under the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal. This was a battle that simply had to be won to ensure that the heart and soul of our industry, the mum and dad family businesses that are our owner operators, were not eliminated by the misguided ambitions of others.

Your hard work, and the hard work of so many others, is reflected in the trucking industry's success.

Ladies and gentlemen.....may I ask you to once more show your appreciation to our past chairs.

It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the incredible work done by the ATA CEOs and many the amazing staff that they have led over the years.

The ATA would also not be where it is now without their dedication and commitment to their work. Our industry has been extremely fortunate to have benefited from the leadership shown by people such as Andrew Higginson, Chris Althaus, Stuart St Clair and now Ben Maguire. They and their teams can stand proud of what they have achieved.

Our industry today is safer, more productive, and supports a vastly bigger population and economy than it did in 1989.

But challenges remain.

The key challenge is safety. And it will remain a challenge until every person who uses our roads gets home safely, every single day.

Our vision is.... and will always be zero fatal or serious injury crashes.

It is ambitious and we can't achieve alone. But it can.....and must..... be done.

For our part, to help Australia get there, the ATA has a strong and viable plan. We must continue to fight for:

- Better roads and more truck rest areas....and they need to be of a standard that our drivers deserve to effectively manage their fatigue.
- The technology we have available to us today is just amazing and can make a demonstrable improvement to safety standards. What we do need is speedier rollout of this technology, including, as a priority, autonomous emergency braking and electronic stability control for all new trucks
- Stronger truck driver licensing and training.....continued investment into our drivers.....our best resource is critical.
- Better safety investigations of truck crashes, bringing in the expertise of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. The ATSB already does this in the maritime, air and rail sectors.....to also do so for serious road crashes is a must.
- And we need better education for car drivers, since as we know more than eight out of 10 fatal multi-vehicle crashes involving trucks are not the fault of the truck driver.

The ATA has contributed to car driver education throughout our history, with the Safety Education Trailer, the Road Ahead, and the Volvo ATA Safety Truck.

Today, with funding from the Australian Government and Australia Post, and with the ongoing support of our Foundation Sponsors, we launched our new safety education program.

It's an incredible resource and it's called SafeT360.

SafeT360 is a state-of-the-art safety program, based on peer reviewed communication research.

It will contribute to future research and safety programs everywhere: it is designed so researchers can follow up on its effectiveness and develop initiatives that directly target 16 – 25 year olds.

It's also great fun. SafeT360 uses virtual reality to deliver our critical safety messages:

- Don't cut in front of trucks
- Don't overtake turning trucks
- Be aware of truck blind spots, and these days
- Don't be distracted by your mobile phone.

Let's take a moment to see how some of the members of our target audience – students at Karabar High School in Queanbeyan – experienced SafeT360 today.

By using those virtual reality goggles that you saw, we can place the students in the driver's seat of a truck without getting them to climb in.

The blind spot segment is particularly effective.....here's a short video that shows just how good it is.

SafeT360 will travel across Australia. There will also be digital media and community service advertising on television, starting this Christmas.

SafeT360 will be a centre of our safety work for years to come, and I know it will be seen as one of the key achievements of our fourth decade.

A second challenge that we will face is how to fund the road system and other infrastructure.

The Australian Government's fuel tax revenue is under threat, because of the shift to low and zero emission vehicles.

The Government will need to change to a new system in the coming years. The ATA will continue its fight to make sure our members are taxed fairly – and charged fairly by toll road operators and stevedores.

These charges alone are just out of control. The stevedores' revenue from access fees rose 63 per cent in the last financial year, and they hold the current price monitoring system in contempt.

Their response to a recent ACCC price monitoring report was to declare that it must be the annual 'kick a stevedore' day.

My response to the stevedores is that for them every day is kick a trucking company day.

These massive companies are extracting monopoly rents from small, family owned Australian businesses.

Governments must now act to stop this incessant gouging. Many of our member associations are doing terrific work on this issue and the ATA will continue to stand side by side with them.

There are forecast to be 127,000 job openings for truck drivers over five years. As an industry, we need to do better on retaining our existing staff and recruiting new staff.

The ATA will continue to argue for:

- simpler fatigue rules, to reduce the number of drivers who abandon the industry because of the paperwork and high fines for trivial mistakes
- a stronger truck driver licensing system and
- better vocational pathways for school leavers to enter the industry.

The only way we will meet these challenges is through industry unity.

When I was researching this speech, I found the handover document that the board of one of the ATA's predecessors, the Road Transport Industry Forum, wrote for some incoming directors.

Here's what they said about industry unity in 1992:

Just as important is the need to recognise that where we do have common goals the industry must learn to work together if it is going to successfully pursue them. Remember, infighting and distractions from this goal can only deplete and severely weaken our case.
(...)

The lack of unity of the past has traditionally meant that governments and our opponents have had no difficulty pursuing the goal of "divide and conquer".

This statement was true then.

And it is true now.

There will always be those that question the relevance, the direction or the strategy of the ATA....and not always from outside our family. The words that I use now are exactly the same as the words from all those years ago.

Now is the time that we simply must stick together as one strong, unified voice.

To not do so at a national level just plays into the hands of those that have different ideals and ambitions to everyone here tonight.

The ATA model works. It delivers for our industry and our members, and it works with undeniable strength when we are united with a common goal.

This is the one and only one way that our industry can achieve the reforms that we so clearly need.....and that is how the ATA and our member associations will continue to grow and strengthen.....together.....as united voice.

Ladies and gentlemen, the trucking industry supports the rest of the Australian economy like no other. The media will always highlight the resources and farming sectors as the backbone

of our economy. And that is true....but that backbone would collapse without the trucking industry.

You just can't get farm products to market or goods to consumers without putting it them on trucks. We need these industry sectors and of course every industry for Australia's future to be strong.....but make no mistake.....Australia needs trucks just as much.

We can all be proud of the achievements we've celebrated tonight and the leaders who made them possible.

Because of their achievements, we can look to the future with confidence and anticipation.

I thank all of them again.....and I thank every one of you here for the contribution you make to our industry and for your attendance tonight.

Please enjoy the rest of the evening.