

MEDIA RELEASE



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DAVID SIMON RE-ELECTED AS ATA CHAIRMAN

The Australian Trucking Association today re-elected David Simon as its chairman for a second term.

Mr Simon was elected unopposed at the ATA's annual general meeting in Canberra.

Mr Simon is the managing director of Simon National Carriers and has a deep understanding of the industry both as an operator and at an association level. He was first elected as the chairman of the ATA in 2010, after many years of experience on the ATA board of management, general council and as part of the Queensland Trucking Association.

Mr Simon's company, Simon National Carriers, is a leading provider of transport and third party warehousing and distribution throughout Australia. The company has a fleet of more than 150 trucks and is a member of TruckSafe, the industry's premier safety accreditation scheme.

Mr Simon said his priorities would be the national heavy vehicle regulator and laws, truck charges and the need for action on sleep disorders.

"Last year, the ATA and state road agencies identified more than a thousand issues with the draft national truck laws. These ranged from serious issues of principle – for example, trucking company directors and executives are presumed guilty under the laws until they can prove their innocence – through to simple drafting errors," Mr Simon said.

"With the support of our members, we convinced Australia's transport ministers to develop a second piece of legislation to fix some of the problems with the first.

"One of my key goals this year will be get as many of those problems fixed as possible, so the industry and community can reap the potential safety and productivity benefits of this important national reform."

Mr Simon said the ATA would also need to continue campaigning on heavy vehicle charges. Australia's transport ministers have agreed to increase the fuel tax on trucks by 10.4 per cent from 1 July. Many registration charges will also rise.

"To put it mildly, we're not happy with the outcome. The increase in the fuel tax and many registration charges will be a huge blow for trucking businesses that are already on the margin," he said.

Mr Simon said the ATA would also need to make action on sleep disorders a priority.

"The ATA has previously argued that the commercial driver medical standards should include an objective test for sleep disorders, as well as the existing Epworth sleepiness questionnaire. We argued this because we know that sleep disorders often go undetected.

"Our advice was not taken up by the National Transport Commission – but this week, the international health journal *Sleep* published a report that confirmed we were right.

"The report showed that 40 per cent of Australian truck drivers are likely to have undiagnosed sleep apnoea; but only 12 per cent reported sleep problems on the questionnaire used in medicals.

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“Sleep apnoea is a major problem with important safety implications. It’s one of the key issues I raised when I became the chairman of the ATA. It needs to be a priority for 2012,” he said.

Also at the meeting, the ATA elected a new director, Andrew Garrety, to its board.

Mr Garrety is the President of the Australian Furniture Removers’ Association and Director of Oldfield Removals and Storage, as well as Chess Moving Canberra.

“I’m looking forward to advancing the interests of both the furniture removalists and trucking operators more generally,” Mr Garrety said.

“The ATA has a critical role in advancing the safety and productivity of the industry, and I’m proud to resume my involvement.”

Mike Almond, Mark Sullivan and Kathy Williams were re-elected unopposed to the board, and Kathy Williams was re-elected unopposed as the ATA’s secretary/treasurer.

Mr Simon paid tribute to the ATA’s two retiring directors, Denis Robertson and Derek Nathan. Mr Robertson retired from the board in June last year because of his health; Mr Nathan retired today.

“Denis was one of the small band who met in 1989 and travelled across Australia in 1991 to set up the ATA. He was one of our foundation directors and chaired the association from 1993 to 1996,” Mr Simon said.

“Along with Kathy Williams and Mike Almond, Denis had a key role in getting our building constructed. At one point, he pledged half a million dollars of his own money to the project. He had only one condition – that no-one told his wife!

“Although he’s less available, he’s still contributing his enormous wisdom and knowledge, especially on lease negotiations. I hope he will be able to rejoin the board in the future.

“Derek Nathan joined the ATA board in 2001, after starting in the trucking industry as an owner driver in 1970. He was a founding member of AFRA and became a life member in 2003.

“He has been involved with the Western Australian Road Transport Association for decades, including as its chair.

“It takes a special sort of commitment for someone from Western Australia to be on the board of an association based in the eastern states. I want to thank Derek for his work on the board and his commitment to skills and training in our industry,” Mr Simon said.

Mr Simon’s report to the ATA annual general meeting is available at
<http://www.truck.net.au/public/about-ata/2011-annual-report>

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