

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **NEW FATIGUE RESEARCH BODY TO REDUCE TRUCK CRASHES**

The Australian Government's decision to fund a new Co-operative Research Centre for Alertness, Safety and Productivity has the potential to reduce the number of fatigue related truck crashes, the Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, David Simon, said today.

On Saturday, the Prime Minister announced that the new CRC will receive \$14.5 million.

Mr Simon said the ATA and the presidents of its member associations had briefed the Government on the importance of funding more research into driver fatigue.

"The need for more research was one of the issues we raised during our TruckWeek delegation program at Parliament House in August last year," Mr Simon said.

"The Government's decision recognises that addressing driver fatigue and alertness is vital for the trucking industry's safety. Although the proportion of serious truck accidents caused by fatigue has halved, insurance industry figures show that fatigue still causes 10 per cent of serious truck crashes.

"We know that more than 80 per cent of major crashes caused by fatigue occur on the driver's outbound journey within 500 kilometres of the point of departure. In other words, the vast majority of these accidents occur because drivers are fatigued when they start work.

"Clearly, there needs to be more research into fitness for duty and especially into sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea, a condition that can increase the risk of crashing by two to seven times.

"Recent research has shown that more than 40 per cent of truck drivers could have sleep apnoea. Only 12 per cent would detect as positive on the test used in truck driver medicals.

"In 2009, the ATA recommended to the National Transport Commission that the driver medical standards should include a better test for sleep apnoea. The NTC did not take up our recommendation on the grounds that it belonged in a fitness for duty standard.

"The development of this standard and a better test needs to be on the NTC's work program, with the new CRC working up better methods for assessing sleep disorders and better treatments tailored to each individual.

"Drivers who are diagnosed with sleep apnoea and treated can continue to work, they are safer on the road, and they say their quality of life is much better.

"As well as thanking the Government, I would like to congratulate Anthony Williams, the interim CEO of the CRC and the many organisations contributing to it," Mr Simon said.

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