

MEDIA RELEASE



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MAKE BUSINESSES ACCOUNTABLE FOR TRUCK MAINTENANCE

Businesses and their senior managers should be made accountable for truck maintenance by extending the chain of responsibility laws, the Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, David Simon, said today.

Mr Simon was opening the trucking industry's premier technical and maintenance event for 2013, the PACCAR and Dealer TMC at the Automotive Centre of Excellence in Melbourne.

"You are the elite of the truck maintenance industry. You work to the highest standards and you stay up to date, including by coming to TMC," Mr Simon told delegates.

"Unfortunately, it's clear from recent events, including the results of Operations Steel and Austrans, that some businesses in our industry do not share your commitment to maintenance and safety.

"In tough times, it is easy for executives who are not on the tools to tweak a few numbers in a spreadsheet and cut back on maintenance in the belief it won't matter," he said.

In his speech, Mr Simon announced a five point plan for improving truck maintenance, safety and the way Australia investigates road accidents.

"The chain of responsibility laws currently apply to speed management, fatigue, vehicle mass, vehicle dimensions and load restraint," Mr Simon said.

"Under CoR, trucking company managers, schedulers, loaders and even consignors have an obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent offences on the road.

"My personal view is that we should **extend CoR to vehicle maintenance**. This would compel businesses and their senior managers to take reasonable steps to make sure you can do your jobs properly, for example, by ensuring you have adequate budgets, resources and training.

"The ATA has long had concerns about the **rigour of the Government National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme** compared to TruckSafe, although of course no accreditation scheme can prevent every accident.

"The NSW Government has proposed a review of NHVAS. The review needs to go ahead; NHVAS needs to be fixed.

"Thirdly, governments need to examine **mandating electronic stability control for at least some dangerous goods vehicles**. A NSW coroner made a recommendation along these lines in a report in 2011. She was investigating a tanker rollover that occurred near Batemans Bay in 2009.

"Four years have passed since the accident and nothing of substance has been done.

"In my view, it would not be necessary to impose this requirement on all vehicles carrying dangerous goods. It should not, for example, apply to trucks carrying domestic cleaning products in retail packaging as part of a larger load.

A safe, professional and viable trucking industry

“We should, however, urgently look at applying it to trucks carrying bulk loads of flammable or combustible liquids, explosives and radioactive substances,” he said.

Mr Simon summed up his final two points as “we need to learn some lessons from air transport.”

“Many people are afraid of flying, but the most dangerous part of a plane trip is the journey to the airport by road,” he said.

“One of the reasons air travel is so safe is its accident investigation system. In Australia, the job is done by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which also looks at marine and rail accidents.

“The ATSB looks beyond the immediate causes of accidents to the organisational and management issues that allow them to happen.

“When it does issue recommendations, it pushes them until it gets an adequate response. Its recommendations and the responses are all public and easy to find.

“As a result, businesses and government agencies have a very strong incentive to take its recommendations seriously.

“I believe we need to move to a similar system. As the first step, governments need to establish a **national database of coronial recommendations about road safety**, together with the responses and updates about the recommendations that have not been followed up.

“The database would need to be accessible to everyone: safety investigators, the industry, the media and the public.

“This new system would not require governments and the industry to follow every coroner’s recommendation. But it would make sure these recommendations were considered seriously.

“In the longer term, governments, the industry, the NHVR and the ATSB need to look at establishing a **national ‘no blame’ accident investigation capacity for fatal truck crashes** similar to the approach used to investigate aviation, marine and rail accidents.

“It’s a big step, but we would learn more from each fatal truck crash than we do now. And there would be more action to stop future accidents from happening,” he said.

A high res image of Mr Simon opening the 2013 PACCAR and Dealer TMC is available for media use by emailing bill.mckinley@truck.net.au

For more information about the 2013 PACCAR and Dealer TMC, visit www.truck.net.au/tmc.

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