

For Immediate Release
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRIDGESTONE BANDAG HIGHWAY GUARDIAN – WA DRIVER RECOGNISED



Bridgestone and the **Australian Trucking Association** have today honoured Lou Morunga of Patience Bulk Haulage as the latest recipient of the **Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian** award.

The Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian award honours the great community service performed by professional truck drivers who go above and beyond the call of duty to assist those around them during the course of their normal work.

In April this year, Lou Morunga was driving a triple road train loaded with iron ore along the Great Northern Highway. About 200km out from Port Hedland, he saw a ute approaching from the opposite direction cross the centre white line and start heading straight towards his cab.

Lou quickly decided to swerve off the road to try to avoid a crash. Lou's swift action prevented a head on collision, but the ute still caught the edge of his cab and sent both vehicles into a spin.

Lou lost his steering when his wheels hit a culvert just after the impact, which ripped the bull bar and bonnet off his truck and sheared the steering box and steer column. With oil, coolant and diesel spilling from the prime mover, Lou managed to safely bring his vehicle to a halt and used his radio to alert all trucks on the highway of the accident.

As soon as his road train was stopped and stable, Lou ran to the ute which had been extensively damaged in the impact. Lou spoke to the driver and kept him conscious until medical help arrived, using his own shirt to pillow the driver's injuries.

Even after the injured driver was taken to hospital, Lou stayed at the scene of the accident and assisted with the recovery of both vehicles. The driver of the ute has since recovered.

"Lou's bravery and selfless nature attracted our attention and made him an ideal candidate for the Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian award," Andrew Moffatt, Managing Director of Bridgestone Australia Ltd, said.

"His quick-thinking and willingness to help speak volumes, not only for Lou but for the many members of the trucking community that routinely go out of their way to help others.

"Bridgestone is enormously pleased that Lou has been announced as the second ever Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian award recipient.

"We are extremely proud supporters of this ATA initiative which helps recognise some of the best people in the trucking industry."

Lou is uncomfortable with being described as a hero.

"I did what any truckie would have done," he said.

"I'm just glad I lived to tell the tale, and him as well. If it had been another kilometre down the road, it would have been a very different story – that part goes over a bridge.

"I just ran to the driver – he didn't look too good, but I couldn't get him out or anything because of the damage.

"Staying with him just seemed like the decent thing to do."

ATA Chair Noelene Watson said Lou's skill and experience enabled him to choose a course of action that protected other road users.

"In a situation like this, it takes a lot of experience to know just how far you can push your equipment and what options are available to you. Lou's quick actions and skilled driving enabled him to avoid a catastrophic head on collision and save the life of a fellow road user," she said.

"He also showed great compassion by staying with the injured driver and providing immediate aid and comfort until medical professionals could get to the scene.

"We're delighted to recognise Lou's brave actions by presenting him with the Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian Award."

As a new Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian, Lou will be hosted to the ATA's national Trucking Australia event in March and be honoured by the industry at the ATA Foundation Sponsors Gala Dinner.

Potential Bridgestone Bandag Highway Guardian candidates can be brought to the ATA's attention at any time by emailing ata@truck.net.au. For more information about the award, go to www.highwayguardian.com.au