

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## INDEPENDENT REGULATOR ESSENTIAL FOR ROAD PRICING REFORM

The introduction of cost-reflective road pricing must include the establishment of an independent economic regulator to set fair, enforceable prices for road users, the Chief Executive of the Australian Trucking Association, Christopher Melham, said today.

Mr Melham was referring to the Australian Government's response this week to the Competition Policy Review (the Harper Review).

"The National Transport Commission (NTC) has acknowledged the existing road charging system routinely overcharges truck and bus operators, because the system underestimates the number of heavy vehicles on the road," Mr Melham said.

"The NTC recently provided ministers with several recommendations to fix the error and bring charges back in line. But instead of reducing charges, ministers decided to freeze the revenue from the charges at 2015-16 levels for the next two years.

"As a result, truck and bus operators will be overtaxed by more than half a billion dollars by June 2018.

"Establishing an independent economic regulator, such as the Access and Pricing Regulator proposed in the Harper Review, would help ensure that governments could not ignore pricing decisions like this in the future."

In the response, the Australian Government has said it was willing to consider resuming competition policy payments to the states and territories.

"The ATA strongly supports the resumption of competition policy payments, which should provide state and territory governments with incentives for road pricing reforms that increase industry productivity," Mr Melham said.

The ATA has also welcomed the Australian Government's commitment that road pricing reform would not involve higher overall charges on road users.

"However, these reforms to road pricing must not involve increased compliance costs for trucking operators, such as requiring small businesses to fit expensive satellite tracking systems," he said.

"Instead, the reforms must include generally lower compliance costs and smoother cashflow as core objectives."

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