**REDUCE THE ROAD USER CHARGE IN THE FEDERAL BUDGET**

The Australian Government should reduce the road user charge on trucking operators in the 2016-17 Budget, the Chief Executive of the Australian Trucking Association, Christopher Melham said today.

The reduction is one of the recommendations in the ATA’s 2016 pre-budget submission. It would save a typical owner-driver about $200 in 2016-17, and would save a typical small fleet operator about $1,100.

Mr Melham said the reduction would help balance the books for the continuing overcharging of trucking operators for their use of the roads.

“The trucking industry pays for our use of the road system through heavy vehicle registration fees and a road user charge on fuel, currently 26.14 cents per litre. The industry has been overcharged since 2007, because the system used to calculate the charges underestimates the number of trucks on the roads,” Mr Melham said.

“Last year, governments agreed to freeze their revenue from heavy vehicle charges in response to this problem. But truck and bus operators will still be overtaxed by $250.2 million in 2016-17 and $264.8 million in 2017-18.

“Our submission recommends that the Government should address its share of the overcharging by reducing the road user chargeto 25.9 cents per litre in 2016-17 and 25.3 cents per litre in 2017-18.

“The Government should then address the rest of its overcharging by increasing its funding for the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program and the Bridges Renewal Program by $49.0 million in 2016-17 and $52.1 million in 2017-18. There would, as a result, be more truck rest areas and a more productive road system,” he said.

The submission recommends that the Government should reprioritise existing spending to plan for road pricing reform, including developing defined service standards and an independent economic regulator for road prices.

“At present, the NTC can only make recommendations about the road user charge and heavy vehicle registration charges. Establishing an independent economic regulator, such as the Access and Pricing Regulator proposed in the Harper Competition Review last year, would help ensure that governments cannot ignore pricing decisions in the future,” he said.

The ATA submission is available at [www.truck.net.au/advocacy/submissions/2016-ata-pre-budget-submission](http://www.truck.net.au/advocacy/submissions/2016-ata-pre-budget-submission).

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