



NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE REGULATOR 2021-2025 HEAVY VEHICLE SAFETY STRATEGY

AUSTRALIAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION 30 APRIL 2021

1. About the Australian Trucking Association

The Australian Trucking Association and its member associations collectively represent 50,000 businesses and 200,000 people in the Australian trucking industry. Together, we are committed to safety, professionalism and viability.

2. Introduction

The NHVR is developing its 2021-2025 heavy vehicle safety strategy; it started the development process with a list of possible themes and focus areas that it circulated to its Industry Reference Forum on 18 January 2021.

The ATA's response raised concerns about—

- the lack of evaluable targets in the draft
- the need for the strategy to take in all the parties in the chain of responsibility
- the need to include the safety benefits of HPFVs
- the use of the social model of road safety.

The ATA's submission on the draft National Road Safety Strategy raised many of the same concerns.¹

The NHVR has now released a formal consultation draft of the strategy.² The ATA welcomes the consultation draft, which addresses most of our concerns. Most importantly—

- the new draft has a strong chain of responsibility focus
- it advocates building positive safety cultures in organisations
- the content relating to the social model of road safety has been removed.

This submission recommends five amendments to the draft, which in our opinion would make a good strategy even stronger.

¹ ATA, [Draft 2021-2030 national road safety strategy](#). Submission, March 2021.

² NHVR, [Draft heavy vehicle road safety strategy 2021-2025](#). March 2021.

3. Targets

Page 2 of the draft restates the draft NRSS targets (a 50 per cent reduction in the per capita fatality rate and a 30 per cent reduction in the per capita serious injury rate by 2030) and provides five years of trend information about heavy vehicle involved fatalities.

These broad targets are not sufficiently detailed to guide the implementation of the strategy or evaluate its success.

In the ATA's view, the NHVR strategy should include subtargets that reflect its defined, limited role and (except to the extent the NHVR can influence other stakeholders) be limited to crashes caused by heavy vehicles.

The ATA recognises that the NHVR and other government agencies may need to carry out detailed modelling to inform these subtargets, which could be done in conjunction with the next stage of the HVNL review.

Recommendation 1

The strategy should include realistic safety subtargets, informed by detailed modelling.

4. Building organisational safety culture

The draft strategy commendably replaces the social model of road safety with a commitment to educating, informing and empowering operators and the supply chain to improve their organisational safety culture.³

A key part of building a safe culture in an organisation is to engineer a culture where safety risks are reported. This only occurs in organisations that have a just culture.⁴ After all, people tend not to report safety issues if they feel they will be unjustly blamed.

The NHVR's December 2018 safety policy included a commitment that it would operate within such a just culture environment.⁵

The NHVR's heavy vehicle safety strategy should restate its just culture commitment. The NHVR should advocate for amendments to the HVNL and make changes to its policies to reinforce this approach.

As specific actions, the NHVR could—

- advocate for amendments to the HVNL to implement a voluntary self-reporting system comparable to the current aviation scheme.⁶

³ NHVR, 2021, 4-5.

⁴ Reason, J. 'Achieving a safe culture: theory and practice,' in *Work and Stress*. 12:3, 1998. 293-306. [Link](#)

⁵ NHVR, [NHVR safety policy](#). December 2018. [29]-[33].

⁶ ATSB, [Aviation self-reporting scheme](#). March 2011.

Under the aviation scheme, a business or individual can self-report a breach of the civil aviation regulations and obtain protection from regulatory action. The scheme aims to encourage industry participants to report safety breaches rather than concealing them; a participant can only claim protection once every five years

- modify its enforcement approach so drivers whose minor work diary breaches have already been investigated and resolved through a company's internal procedures are not issued with an infringement notice for the same breach⁷
- advocate for reduced fines for minor paperwork offences. These are seen as unfair and are, essentially, a random hazard for drivers.

Recommendation 2

The strategy should restate the NHVR's commitment to the just culture approach to building a strong industry safety and reporting culture.

5. Expediting the uptake of safety technology

The strategy envisages that one of the NHVR's priorities would be to enable industry to increase its uptake of heavy vehicle safety technologies.⁸

One significant barrier to the uptake of safety technology – and particularly fatigue monitoring – is the concern that personal information could be used for enforcement purposes or released publicly.

Previous NTC research shows that many businesses and drivers will remain wary of safety technology until these concerns are resolved.⁹

The existing restrictions in the HVNL on the use of IAP and EWD information¹⁰ only provide a modest level of protection compared, for example, to the prohibition on the use of flight deck recordings in disciplinary investigations or criminal proceedings against crew members.¹¹

In the ATA's view, the safety strategy should commit the NHVR to addressing the privacy concerns that may slow the roll out of safety technology.

Separately, the draft strategy says the NHVR would identify changes to the Australian Design Rules that would expedite the uptake of safety technologies.¹²

The strategy should also commit the NHVR to identifying changes to the in-service vehicle standards and the National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual.

⁷ ATA, [HVNL review: regulatory tools](#). November 2020, 18.

⁸ NHVR, 2021, 6.

⁹ NTC, [Review of regulatory telematics](#). March 2018. 45.

¹⁰ See HVNL, pts 7.4, 13.4.

¹¹ *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* (Cth), pt 6.

¹² NHVR, 2021. 6.

Recommendation 3

The strategy should commit the NHVR to addressing the privacy concerns that may slow the rollout of safety technology.

Recommendation 4

The strategy should include identifying potential changes to the in-service vehicle standards and the National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual.

6. Safe heavy vehicle road use

Page 7 of the strategy says the NHVR would work in collaboration with industry and governments to identify non-infrastructure safety solutions for the current and future freight task.

The most valuable of these solutions would be for the NHVR to support increased access for high productivity freight vehicles (HPFVs). The reasons HPFVs offer improved safety include—

- **the reduction in the number of truck trips required to move any given amount of freight.** For example, 42 standard semi-trailers are needed to move 1,000 tonnes of freight. Only 21 PBS 30 metre A-doubles would be needed to move the same amount.

Reducing the growth in the number of trucks on the road and the number of truck kilometres travelled reduces the interactions between trucks and other road users (as well as reducing congestion), which in turn reduces the potential for crashes.

- **the trucks meet higher engineering and safety standards.** HPFVs are likely to be newer vehicles that meet more recent safety standards.
- **the drivers are licensed to higher standards, are more experienced and often required to have medicals.** HPFVs are typically multi-combination vehicles, so their drivers need to meet the higher requirements associated with an MC licence.¹³ Austroads has reported that HPFV drivers are more experienced, which reduces the risk of crashes.¹⁴ Additionally, HPFV drivers are often required to have regular medicals.

In its 2014 examination of the safety benefits of HPFVs, Austroads concluded that the HPFVs in its survey recorded 76 per cent fewer accidents than would be the case for conventional trucks.¹⁵

¹³ For example, see [ACT Government: Heavy vehicle driver licensing](#) eligibility and practical driving assessment requirements for MC, HC and HR classes.

¹⁴ Austroads, [Quantifying the benefits of high productivity vehicles](#), 2014. 22.

¹⁵ Austroads, 2014, i.

Recommendation 5

Page 7 of the strategy should emphasise the safety importance of supporting increased access for HPFVs.