

SARTA CONFERENCE 19TH AUGUST 2023

WHEN THE FENNEL VIDEO ENDS

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

ON BEHALF OF VICE CHAIRS CARL HAMILTON, MARK CROSSLING AND OUR ENTIRE BOARD IT GIVES US MUCH PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO OUR CONFERENCE AND IN PARTICULAR:

MINISTER TOM KOUTSANTONIS

DAVID SMITH, CHAIR of the ATA

FRANK TEDESCO, President of LRTASA

THE VERY FACT YOU ARE ALL HERE TODAY, SHOWS YOUR ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO BEING INVOLVED, LISTENING, LEARNING AND BEING A VOICE FOR THE ROAD TRANSPORT INDUSTRY, AND THAT INCLUDES FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SIMPLY CAN'T BE HERE TODAY AS THEY ARE ON THE ROAD, IN THEIR RIGS AND RELY ON BROADER INDUSTRY TO BE THEIR VOICE TOO.

THE PROGRAM WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER FOR TODAY SEEKS TO DISCUSS AND TACKLE KEY ISSUES THAT WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH AROUND ACCESS, SKILLED LABOUR, I.R. AND THE HVNL AND WE ASK YOU ALL TO BE INVOLVED. I WILL ADDRESS A COUPLE OF THOSE ISSUES.

THANKS WENDY AND NTI FOR THAT FANTASTIC VIDEO. I WILL RETURN TO THAT TOPIC SHORTLY.

IN MY 40 YEARS IN THIS INDUSTRY WITH OVER HALF OF THAT WORKING WITH STEVE SHEARER AND OUR BOARD VOLUNTARILY TO ADVOCATE FOR INDUSTRY, I HAVE GOT TO SAY THAT I HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE CONCERNED THAN I AM RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW. LET ME TELL YOU WHY.

THERE ARE KEY ASPECTS OF HOW WE OPERATE WHERE WE SEEM TO HAVE ARRIVED AT AN IMPASS. WE HAVE REAL SOLUTIONS, PROVEN SOLUTIONS BY WAY OF TRIALS IN DELIVERING COMPETENCY BASED, UPSKILLED MC DRIVERS AND INVESTMENT IN EQUIPMENT THAT CAN DEAL WITH THE FREIGHT GROWTH, REDUCE CONGESTION AND EMISSIONS AND DELIVER SAFE AND EFFICIENT OUTCOMES. BUT WE HAVE HIT AN ALMIGHTY, LONG-WINDED ROAD BLOCK.

THERE IS NO DOUBT WE APPRECIATE THE CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU MINISTER, AND THE DEPARTMENT. MY COMMENTS ARE NOT ABOUT ATTACKING AND CREATING A "THEM AND US" SITUATION. BUT WE CANNOT SIMPLY SIT HERE YEAR AFTER YEAR, SMILING AND TIPPY TOE-ING AROUND THE CRITICAL ISSUES. WE NEED MATURE AND FRANK DISCUSSION BECAUSE WE ALL WANT AND NEED THE SAME OUTCOMES; WHICH ARE:

A SAFE AND EFFICIENT ROAD FREIGHT INDUSTRY THAT SUPPORTS THE COMMUNITY'S LIFESTYLE AND UNDERPINS A COMPETITIVE SA ECONOMY.

WE CERTAINLY WELCOME THE CREATION OF THE FREIGHT AND SUPPLY CHAIN STRATEGY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE OUTCOME. SARTA, LIKE YOU MINISTER, WILL BE SEEKING TO ENSURE IT'S REALISTIC AND EFFECTIVE AND ON THIS POINT SARTA IS WELL REPRESENTED BY STEVE SHEARER AND WENDY FENNEL AND DAVID SMITH FROM THE ATA.

OUR INDUSTRY IS WORKING WITH SUPPLIERS TO INVEST, DEVELOP AND MAKE BEST USE OF HIGH PRODUCTIVITY VEHICLES, SO WE CAN COPE SAFELY WITH THE GROWING FREIGHT TASK WHILE REDUCING CONGESTION AND EMISSIONS. BUT OUR EFFORTS ARE STYMIED BY WHAT APPEARS TO BE RED TAPE.

OPTIMISING THE SAFE USE OF HIGH PRODUCTIVITY VEHICLES AND USING THE LEAST NUMBER OF TRUCK MOVEMENTS FOR THE TASK, IS THE ONLY WAY THAT THE INDUSTRY CAN MEET:

- THE ECONOMY'S NEED FOR EFFICIENT ROAD FREIGHT;
- THE COMMUNITY'S DESIRE FOR MINIMISED ROAD CONGESTION AND EMISSIONS; AND
- EVERYONE'S EXPECTATION OF SAFE ROAD FREIGHT.

WE APPLAUDED THE PREVIOUS STATE LABOUR GOVERNMENT WHEN IT FACILITATED SOME 40 – 50 TRIALS, WITH 100 % SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES. IN ONE CASE WE RESOLVED A 15 YEAR OLD APPLICATION. ONE TRIAL RESULTED IN 20 B DOUBLE MOVEMENTS BECOMING JUST 14 ROAD TRAIN MOVEMENTS.

THAT'S A 30% REDUCTION IN TRUCK MOVEMENTS. AND WE COULD DO SO MUCH MORE TO REDUCE TRUCK MOVEMENTS. THE GRAPHICS USED THAT YEAR AT OUR CONFERENCE OF A REVITALISED HEART WITH ARTERIES CLEARED OF BLOCKAGES DEMONSTRATED THE POSITIVE IMPACT.

THE POLICY WITHIN DIT AT THE TIME WAS "**A PREFERENCE FOR YES**" AND SO EFFORTS WERE MADE TO FACILITATE HV ACCESS UNLESS IT WAS UNSAFE. THAT POLICY SEEMS TO HAVE CEASED.

IF OUR INDUSTRY IS TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER WHAT THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES IS NEEDED FOR THE ECONOMY AND THE COMMUNITY, THAT "**PREFERENCE FOR YES**" NEEDS TO BE REVIVED AND SUPPORTED.

AT LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE THIS WAS ALL RAISED, WITH MANY OF OUR QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE. SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS HAVE NOT SEEN A RESUMPTION OF TRIALS. THE TRIALS WORKED SO WELL IN THE PAST AND DELIVERED TANGIBLE OUTCOMES, FOR GOVERNMENT, THE COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY. IN FACT WE HAD SHELVED THE "**SA IS THE NANNY STATE**" THOUGHT AND REPLACED IT WITH "**SA IS THE PROGRESSIVE STATE**".

IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HOW IS IT WE HAVE GONE FROM THAT POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT, TO SPENDING THE LAST YEAR WORKING ON TERMS OF REFERENCE ABOUT WHAT A TRIAL POLICY MIGHT LOOK LIKE AND WHAT THE IMPLEMENTATION BOUNDARIES WILL BE.

THE SHORTFALL IN SKILLED COMPETENT STAFF AND TRAINERS TO UPSKILL STAFF, IS A MASSIVE ISSUE FOR OUR INDUSTRY. THIS SHORTFALL THREATENS OUR CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE NECESSARY SAFE AND EFFICIENT ROAD FREIGHT SERVICE REQUIRED TO UNDERPIN THE ECONOMY. ITS EVEN MORE DIRE IN THE REGIONS.

ONE OF OUR KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE CRITICAL NEED FOR SKILLED COMPETENT MC DRIVERS IS TO UPGRADE THE UNTAPPED POOL OF HC DRIVERS TO SAFE AND EFFICIENT MC DRIVERS.

AGAIN, RED TAPE AND UNJUSTIFIABLE REGULATORY BURDEN IS JUST KILLING OFF THE GREAT INITIATIVE THAT WENDY FENNELL JUST EXPLAINED IN THAT EXCELLENT VIDEO.

MINISTER, THE CURRENT OUTDATED GOVERNMENT SYSTEM, WHICH YOU REGULATE, IS THAT:

1. A DRIVER, **BILL**, GETS THEIR HC (SEMI) LICENCE;
2. THEN THEY MUST WAIT FOR 12 MONTHS
 - a. THERE IS **NO REQUIREMENT TO GAIN ANY EXPERIENCE IN A SEMI**
 - b. THERE IS **NO REQUIREMENT TO EVEN LOOK AT OR USE ANY TRUCK**
 - c. THERE IS VERY LIMITED OPPORTUNITY FOR THESE DRIVERS TO GET **ANY EXPERIENCE**
 - d. THERE IS **NO REQUIREMENT FOR FURTHER TRAINING**
3. THEN AFTER WASTING A YEAR THEY CAN APPLY FOR AN MC (B-DOUBLE) LICENCE
4. **AND THEY MUST PASS THE MC ASSESSMENT TO GET A LICENCE**

SARTA AND WENDY FENNELL HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS TO SECURE A TRIAL OF A SMARTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO PROGRESS DRIVERS FROM HC TO MC WITH BETTER TRAINING AND SAFETY OUTCOMES.

UNDER THE HC TO MC UPGRADE TRIAL, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN RUNNING FOR 3 YEARS

1. A DRIVER, **FRED**, GETS THEIR HC (SEMI) LICENCE;
2. INSTEAD OF WASTING 12 MONTHS GAINING ZERO EXPERIENCE OR TRAINING LIKE BILL, THEY:
 - a. UNDERGO FULL TIME SUPERVISED PRACTICAL ON-THE-JOB TRAINING BEHIND THE WHEEL WITH A QUALIFIED SUPERVISING DRIVER SITTING WITH THEM IN THE TRUCK;
 - b. THEY ARE TRAINED AND GET EXPERIENCE IN THE REAL WORLD:
 - i. USING THE EQUIPMENT THAT THEY WILL OPERATE
 - ii. DOING THE TASKS THEY WILL PERFORM
 - iii. IN THE ENVIRONMENT THAT THEY WILL WORK IN ONCE LICENCED.
3. THIS IS ALL TRACKED AND RECORDED IN A LOG;
4. ONLY WHEN THEY AND THE EMPLOYER CONSIDER THAT THEY ARE GENUINELY UP TO MC STANDARD THEY CAN APPLY FOR AN MC (B-DOUBLE) LICENCE
5. **AT THE END OF THE PROCESS FRED MUST PASS THE SAME MC ASSESSMENT THAT YOU REQUIRE BILL TO PASS TO GET AN MC LICENCE.**

MINISTER THE DIFFERENCE COULD NOT BE MORE STARK:

1. UNDER OUR MODEL, THE DRIVERS GET **EXTRA AND REAL TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE;**
 - a. UNDER THE GOVERNMENT MODEL, THEY GET NONE
2. UNDER OUR MODEL MORE MC DRIVERS WHO HAVE BEEN MORE THOROUGHLY TRAINED AND WITH MORE RELEVANT EXPERIENCE BECOME AVAILABLE AND MUCH SOONER.

THE STICKING POINT, WHICH SO FAR WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MOVE THE DEPARTMENT ON, IS THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS OF ON-THE-JOB TRAINING REQUIRED.

THIS IS QUITE EXTRAORDINARY BECAUSE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT MODEL **NO TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE IS REQUIRED** BETWEEN GETTING AN HC AND GOING FOR AN MC LICENCE.

EXPERIENCE IN THE HC TO MC TRIAL OVER THE PAST 3 YEARS HAS SHOWN QUITE CLEARLY THAT:

1. THE INITIAL 240 HRS THAT THE DEPARTMENT WANTED WAS IMPRACTICAL, UNNECESSARY AND UNAFFORDABLE;
 - a. COSTS ARE HIGH BECAUSE THE TRAINEE AND THE SUPERVISING DRIVER BOTH HAVE TO BE PAID AND THE PRODUCTIVITY IS LOWER INITIALLY
2. AND THE REVISED 120 HR MINIMUM IS ALSO **UNNECESSARY** IN MOST CASES;

BASED ON THAT EXPERIENCE WE HAVE PROPOSED A **MINIMUM OF 40 HRS** BECAUSE:

1. MOST DRIVERS ARE WELL AND TRULY AT THE MC STANDARD BY THEN, ALTHOUGH SOME DO TAKE LONGER;
2. NO DRIVER OR EMPLOYER IS GOING TO WASTE THE SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS AN UNSUCCESSFUL MC ASSESSMENT COSTS;
3. SO ONLY THOSE DRIVERS WHO ARE TRULY READY WILL UNDERTAKE THE MC ASSESSMENT AFTER THE 40 HRS;
4. OTHER DRIVERS WILL CONTINUE IN THEIR TRAINING FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES THEM TO BE READY TO SUCCESSFULLY UNDERTAKE THE MC ASSESSMENT.

THE DEPARTMENT IS INSISTING ON A **MINIMUM OF 120 HRS WHICH IS 120 MORE THAN YOU REQUIRE OF ANY DRIVER WHO DOES NOTHING FOR 12 MONTHS UNDER YOUR CURRENT SYSTEM.**

IT ALSO MAKES THE MODEL UNECONOMIC AND KILL IT OFF, WHICH WILL BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

THE DEPARTMENT IS APPARENTLY SEEKING AN EXPERT OPINION ON THIS POINT, AND HAS BEEN DOING SO FOR 5 MONTHS. IF AN EXPERT SUGGESTS THAT 40 HRS IS INSUFFICIENT, THEN THEY WOULD ALSO HAVE TO SAY THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT SYSTEM OF JUST WAITING FOR 12 MONTHS IS WORSE.

IT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IF WE WERE SEEKING TO REPLACE A GENUINE 12 MONTH EXPERIENCE PERIOD WITH A SHORTER PERIOD BUT WE ARE NOT. THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT 12 MONTH WAITING PERIOD IS **NOT AN EXPERIENCE PERIOD AT ALL.**

THIS SHOULD ALL BE COMPETENCY-BASED AND THE SIMPLE FACT IS THAT NO DRIVER GETS AN MC LICENCE WITHOUT PASSING THE GOVERNMENT'S REGULATED MC ASSESSMENT PROCESS.

WE URGE YOU TO RECOGNISE THESE REALITIES AND SUPPORT A GENUINE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT **AND AGREE TO PILOT OUR 40 HR MINIMUM PROPOSAL.**

WE ARE EVERY BIT AS CONCERNED WITH SAFETY AS YOU AND THE DEPARTMENT ARE. THESE ARE OUR PEOPLE. NO OPERATOR WANTS THEIR TEAM INJURED. SO WE DON'T WANT ACCIDENTS, HARM TO THE PUBLIC OR OUR PEOPLE, OR MULTI MILLION DOLLAR DESTRUCTION OF RIGS AND LOADS.

THIS COMPETANCY APPROACH ENSURES THE OUTCOMES AND ALLOWS THE CANDIDATES WHO SHINE AND DEMONSTRATE THE REQUIRED SKILL SET TO PROGRESS, WHILE OTHER CANDIDATES WHO MAY DEVELOP THE SKILLS MORE SLOWLY, TAKE THE ADDITIONAL TRAINING HOURS THEY NEED.

WHEN THE INDUSTRY'S MAJOR INSURER, NTI, GETS BEHIND OPERATORS AND PROJECTS LIKE THIS, AS THEY HAVE IN WENDY FENNELLS VIDEO, ITS BECAUSE THEY SEE THE SAFETY BENEFITS OF TARGETED, FIT-FOR-PURPOSE TRAINING THAT PRODUCES COMPETENT JOB-READY, MENTALLY SATISFIED DRIVERS. WE SHOULD ALL TAKE NOTE OF THAT.

THE REVIEW OF THE HVNL CONTINUES TO CREATE UNCERTAINTY, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE HANDLING OF FATIGUE. THE INDUSTRY HAS WAITED MANY YEARS FOR THIS REVIEW AND WE ARE DESPERATE TO END UP WITH A LAW THAT ALLOWS FOR REST WHEN NEEDED AND FOR DRIVERS TO BE ABLE TO WORK WHEN RESTED. WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO MANAGE FATIGUE, NOT MINDLESS COMPLIANCE WITH INEFFECTIVE COUNTING OF HOURS RULES.

MEANWHILE, DESPITE YEARS OF DISCUSSION, WITH COMMITTEE AFTER COMMITTEE AND EXPERT AFTER EXPERT EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS, WE STILL DO NOT HAVE INTERIM MEASURES IN PLACE.

WE BELIEVE THAT OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD, HAVE HIGHJACKED THE AGENDA AND ARE FAILING TO DELIVER TO YOU AND TO US WHAT MINISTERS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED IN 2018 THEY WANTED, WHICH WAS:

1. A NEW RE-WRITTEN SMALLER AND SIMPLER HVNL
2. THAT IS RISK-BASED AND SAFETY-FOCUSSED
3. And WHICH FACILITATES PRODUCTIVITY.

THEY ARE NOT DELIVERING A NEW SIMPLER HVNL. THEY ARE JUST AMENDING IT. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE AMENDED HVNL:

1. WILL NOT COPE EFFECTIVELY WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY; AND
2. THAT IF TOO MUCH DETAIL IS LEFT IN THE ACT, THEN ANY CHANGES NEEDED TO FIX THINGS AND RESOLVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, WILL GET BOGGED DOWN FOR YEARS BY THE LONG DRAWN-OUT PROCESS OF SECURING AGREEMENT FROM THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL.

THE DELAYS IN REFORMING THE HVNL AND DELIVERY OF TRUE RISK-BASED SAFETY-FOCUSSED LAW, AS MINISTERS AGREED, HAS ABSOLUTELY BEEN A SIGNIFICANT CAUSE OF TOO MANY LONG-TERM BUSINESSES CALLING IT A DAY. THE ISSUES ARE ALL INTERRELATED.

GOOD DRIVERS ARE ALSO BEING DRIVEN OUT OF THE INDUSTRY, WHEN WE CAN LEAST AFFORD IT, BECAUSE OF UNREASONABLE FINES AND PENALTIES, EXCESSIVE UNJUSTIFIED ENFORCEMENT AND RED TAPE AND REGULATION JUST GONE MAD. NEVILLE JOHN WILL COVER THIS AND MORE LATER.

MINISTER WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE WAY THE HVNL REVIEW IS BEING HANDLED AND WITH THE REFUSAL OF SENIOR OFFICIALS TO ENGAGE FULLY WITH INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN STATES. WE BELIEVE THEY ARE NOT FULLY UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANT AND UNNECESSARY HARDSHIP AND OVER-REGULATION UNDER THE HVNL THAT EXISTS IN OUR WORLD.

WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT YOU AND THE OTHER MINISTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE NOT REALLY BEING WELL BRIEFED ON THIS.

ITS CLEAR FROM NTC BRIEFINGS THAT THE TIMELINE FOR THE RELEASE OF THE DRAFT AMENDMENTS BILL AND ITS PLANNED INTRODUCTION TO QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT WILL ALLOW BARELY A MONTH FOR INDUSTRY CONSULTATION, IN APRIL 2024. THIS RAISES A SERIOUS RISK OF ERRORS AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES ENDING UP IN THE HVNL. WE WILL ALL BE STUCK WITH THEM FOR ANOTHER 10 YEARS.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND ALTERNATIVE FUELS NEED TO BE ON THE AGENDA, BUT WITH REALISTIC PROJECTS AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND POLICIES THAT REFLECT THE TASK AND GEOGRAPHY OF OUR COUNTRY. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WENDY FENNEL SHARING HER FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE IN THIS SPACE.

I OFTEN HEAR IT SAID THAT INDUSTRY NEEDS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HELPING ITSELF. THAT IS THE VERY THING WE ARE DOING. WHETHER IT BE WORKING WITH OUR SUPPLIERS AND INVESTING TO PRODUCE THE MOST EFFICIENT AND SAFEST RIGS AND COMBINATIONS, INVESTING IN INTENSIVE IN-HOUSE BUDDY TRAINING TO UP-SKILL INEXPERIENCE PEOPLE TO THE REQUIRED COMPETENCIES OR INITIATING AND RUNNING OF THE HV SIMULATOR PROGRAM, HOUSED IN A HOME MADE POSSIBLE BY OPERATORS, WE ARE DOING THE HARD YARDS.

IN CONCLUSION MINISTER, WE URGE YOU TO:

1. REINSTATE THE PROVEN EFFECTIVE HV ACCESS POLICY OF:
 - a. **“A PREFERENCE FOR YES”** AND
 - b. THE USE OF HV **ACCESS TRIALS**.
2. AGREE TO A PILOT OF THE HC TO MC LICENCE UPGRADE WITH **A MINIMUM OF 40 HOURS** ON THE JOB SUPERVISED TRAINING; AND
3. ENSURE FULL AND EARLY CONSULTATION WITH INDUSTRY ON THE DRAFT HVNL AMENDMENTS