NHVR
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

NSW Draft Freight and Ports Plan

Submission to Transport for NSW

29 March 2018

Introduction

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) supports the development of the NSW Draft Freight and Ports Plan (the Plan), which builds on a number of successful projects delivered as part of the 2013 NSW Freight and Ports Strategy.

The Plan's issues-based approach, in particular the priority plan areas and identification of investment and initiatives is critical to delivering tangible and meaningful outcomes for industry.

As part of its inception, the NHVR was tasked with delivering red tape reduction and improved productivity to the Australian people and economy.

Our organisation and the achievement of this agenda has come a long way since the Regulator opened for business in 2013; however there is much more that can be delivered with the right policy settings and actions.

The NHVR welcomes the opportunity to provide our feedback on the draft Plan and looks forward to continuing to work with the NSW Government on its successful delivery.

For further information, please contact Annette Finch, Project Director, 07 3309 8615 or annette.finch@nhvr.gov.au

Our Vision

Our vision is for a safe, efficient, productive heavy vehicle industry serving the needs of Australia.

Our Mission

Through leadership and advocacy we administer a national statutory system to deliver streamlined regulatory services and administration to the heavy vehicle road transport sector, minimising regulatory burdens while fostering greater safety and productivity.

About this Submission

The NHVR submission is unique in the sense that we are an industry regulator providing our view of how we see the 'future state' of heavy vehicle regulation and its impact on freight movements.

The link between transport infrastructure and land-use planning is critical.

Our submission focuses on a number of key areas that address the priority plan areas. The Plan identifies six priority action areas:

1. Strengthen freight industry and government partnerships
2. Increase access for freight across the road and rail network
3. Protect existing freight precincts and ensure sufficient land use
4. Facilitate introduction of technologies that reduce freight costs and impacts
5. Reduce the regulatory burden on industry
6. Ensure safe, efficient and sustainable freight access to places.

Priority Action Areas

1. Strengthen freight industry and government partnerships

a. Reciprocal data-sharing arrangements:

The NHVR is undertaking nationally significant programs of work including involvement in the National Heavy Vehicle Registration Scheme, the National Compliance Information System and Roadworthiness program, which will enable delivery of a national profile of the heavy vehicle fleet to deliver improved safety and productivity outcomes.

A key element of these programs is the reciprocal sharing of data between the jurisdictions and the NHVR. The collaborative approach and centralised model used for collecting registration data has demonstrated great value in having one single group focused on data sharing and the NHVR is seeking jurisdictional support to continue this model going forward.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to continue NSW's involvement in a national data working group.

b. Access to crash data:

Crash data is a key data set that will enable the NHVR to identify hotspots and implement targeted interventions across the country to improve safety outcomes.

The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) administer the National Crash Database on behalf of the states, however the NHVR is currently unable to access this information. The NHVR is seeking jurisdictional permission to access this data for use in better identifying a picture of national safety.

Recommendation:	NSW to support the provision of national crash data from BITRE to the NHVR.

2. Increase access for freight across the road and rail network

6. Ensure safe, efficient and sustainable freight access to places

a. Gazettal of Performance-Based Standard (PBS) vehicles on the NSW freight network

A recent National Transport Commission (NTC) review of the PBS Scheme estimated that PBS vehicles, when compared to the corresponding non-PBS vehicles:

- are involved in 46% fewer major crashes, based on the distances travelled
- provide an average productivity increase of 24.8%
- have saved 440 million km of truck travel between 2014 and 2016.

This clearly demonstrates an ability to deliver the freight task in a smarter and safer way, in fewer trips.

In order to fully realise the productivity and safety benefits that PBS has to offer, broader network access for these vehicles is required. As was highlighted in the recent NTC PBS Marketplace Review, lack of access to major interstate freight routes in NSW (namely the Hume and Pacific Highways) represents a barrier to PBS vehicle growth.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to map PBS networks for each access level aligned with the equivalent prescriptive vehicle network, and publish a National Notice for each by the end of financial year 2020/21 (as per PBS Marketplace Review). Include a commitment in the Plan to prioritise and gazette key interstate freight routes. Include a commitment in the Plan to review access, travel and vehicle policies to ensure alignment of freight intermodal connectors (use, performance and solutions) that encourage modes to work seamlessly rather than in competition of each other.

b. Top three recommendations - National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy

The NHVR has been working closely with the Commonwealth and the National Freight and Supply Chain Expert Panel to identify opportunities which will deliver economic improvements to the freight task.

The NHVR has provided a number of key recommendations to the panel with a specific focus on providing assistance to road managers to help support opening up networks to High Productivity Vehicles.

The NHVR has identified the below 'top three' recommendations as delivering significant benefit in relation to 'first and last mile' access in particular.

Top three recommendations:

i. Recruit dedicated Heavy Vehicle Access Liaison Officers (HVALO) in each jurisdiction to work closely with councils in managing and improving heavy vehicle access on their local road network.

ii. Develop a national 'local bridges and roads support package' to improve the assessment of local roads and bridges, including adoption of national assessment standards and criteria, a list of accredited panel of assessors and a dedicated assessment funding pool.

iii. Use data direct from industry (NHVR Portal) to identify priority freight routes (including 'first, middle and last mile' supply chain links) and where major freight disconnects exist in them. Develop a 'Key Freight Routes' Working Group to prioritise this work.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to work with the Commonwealth and the NHVR to deliver the NHVR's top three including the 'first and last mile' recommendations.

c. Infrastructure construction and upgrades to accommodate HPVs

Infrastructure must be built to accommodate High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) including mass and dimension as well as vehicles capable of moving import/export containers (i.e. 40 foot containers).

This should include bridges, road shoulders, rest areas, overtaking lanes, and decoupling areas.

Governments must also recognise the need for, and where necessary provide the appropriate infrastructure to allow for on-road safety and compliance activities to be conducted in monitoring the safety and compliance of the Heavy Vehicle fleet i.e. Heavy Vehicle Safety Stations, Roadside Inspection Facilities, Weigh in Motion, Automatic Number Plate Recognition, etc.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to build and upgrade infrastructure to accommodate HPVs and provide appropriate infrastructure for on-road safety and compliance activities.

3. Protect existing freight precincts and ensure sufficient land use

a. Freight networks are considered in planning instruments

Access decision making is adversely affected by state and local planning instruments. As settlement and densification encroaches on traditional freight routes and intermodal access points, it is critical to retain freight gateways as enablers of the delivery of essential supplies to our urban populations.

It is encouraging to see the Plan giving priority for performance of the freight transport networks that support intermodal facilities.

Similarly new developments need to include a minimum level of access for heavy vehicle freight movements. This should include future proofing to accommodate HPVs and consider how night deliveries (off-peak times) and use of the network at off-peak times will require the collaboration of road managers and businesses.

If local and state-based planning schemes incorporate these principles it will reduce the need for access permits in the future.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to ensure that all relevant and controlled planning instruments take into consideration the efficiency of freight movement through the gazettal of key 'first and last mile' access networks.

4. Facilitate introduction of technologies that reduce freight costs and impacts

a. Use of vehicle and driver technologies to improve productivity

Leading road freight companies are continually investing in up-to-date data and information technology systems to deliver benefits to their customers and, in turn, the Australian economy.

The current NTC 'Review of Regulatory Telematics' mostly focuses on developing a best practice model with governments, industry and regulators. This is focused on setting minimum agreed standards rather than mandating a prescriptive device.

Governments know from the Review that industry has very rich sources of data:

a. More than 98,000 articulated heavy vehicles are registered in Australia;
b. Around 4,000 are enrolled in Intelligent Access Program (IAP); and
c. Close to 39,000 telematics units are installed in heavy vehicles (other than IAP). These other unit can meet the Telematics In-Vehicle Unit Functional and Technical Specification requirements.

Collectively, there is far greater benefit for governments to leverage and "share" the benefits from this massive investment.

The focus should be on a framework for the collection of information from industry, which may include telematics information and its use with other regulatory sources of information, rather than on a framework for telematics.

The question governments need to ask (through the NTC's Review) is

a. why do they want the data i.e. what problem are they trying to fix (industry, NHVR, road authorities and road managers including local government)?
b. how can government work in a positive way with industry to share this data?

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan for NSW to work with the NTC and the NHVR on developing a best practice approach of how technology is used and how it is best integrated with industry practices from an industry perspective.

5. Reduce the regulatory burden on industry

a. Ensure successful delivery of nationally harmonised access notices

In establishing the NHVR, the Australian Government identified flow-on benefits to the Australian economy from the NHVR's red tape reduction agenda of up to $30 billion over the next 20 years.

Delivery of harmonised notices across state borders is where governments can drive significant efficiency for industry and road managers through a reduction in applying for and issuing of permits.

The NHVR needs jurisdictions to continue working with us to reduce state-based policy conditions to drive this efficiency outcome. In particular, during the consultation period for the High Mass Limits (HML) National Declaration, industry consistently raised concerns with the application of IAP (in NSW and QLD) on vehicles operating at HML.

Industry cited issues concerning IAP's prohibitive cost, the administrative burden on business in managing alleged off-route non-conformances and a lack of regulatory value.

According to industry, HML weights were agreed nationally following the introduction of road friendly suspension (RFS) which eliminates any additional road wear impact compared to General Mass Limits. Industry believe they have made this investment without receiving the associated benefits of increased access.

Other participating jurisdictions do not require IAP as a condition for operating at HML. South Australia recently removed IAP as a requirement following consultation with the NHVR. This requirement is a significant impediment in delivering valuable productivity gains for industry.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to work with the NHVR to deliver harmonised national notices and reduce state-based conditions for industry, including further discussion with industry to remove the requirement for vehicles to have IAP.

b. Review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL)

The NHVR strongly supports the NTC bringing forward the review of the HVNL, with a preference for the review to commence as soon as possible (no later than 2019) to help address pressing obstacles to regulatory reform embedded in the legislation. A key part of the Review is around ensuring more priority is given to heavy vehicle access to improve permit turnaround times and give more certainty to industry on access timeframes.

Recommendation:	Include a commitment in the Plan to support the immediate commencement of the Review with a key focus on providing inputs that improve national productivity for regulatory functions.