

Sir,

I have been in the industry for over 37 years, starting off as a driver then progressing to my first truck in 1991 and to this day operate a small fleet of ten. In that time I have covered around 7.5 million klms myself. I have done overnight express, produce, wide loads, general freight with flat top open trailers, tautliners, fridge vans, heavy machinery floats, just to name a small amount of my experience. With the years of knowledge I have I think I have a fair grasp of the transport industry.

I could go on for hours about the problems truck operators face daily but I will point out some most important ones.

PAYMENTS--- In this day and age of electronics I cannot see why a business cannot be paid in 7 days of return of paperwork. The delivery has been made to the DC, the stock is redelivered to the store then sold. Payment is immediate. So why does it take up to 60 to 90 days to be paid. Cash flow is the life blood of small business, early payment does not cost anyone any extra but the benefit to the receiving small business is enormous.

FUEL--- This is our second biggest cost behind wages. A few cents per litre increase can cripple a small operation very quickly as we have no avenue of being able to pass the cost on. Australians pay way too much for fuel. Our capital cities are all thousands of klms apart so we use enormous amounts of fuel to deliver all over Australia. If fuel was to drop 20c per litre it would inject large amounts into the economy. Operators would spend that money on maintenance and investment in new equipment.

REGISTRATION—The current system of truck registration is grossly unfair. **FACT..** The Dodgem Car operator at the local show operates a b-double to carry his show ride around the country. He only does about 16,000 klms per year but still has to pay \$17,000 a year rego fees. Operators of small fleets such as myself can only do between 200,000 – 240,000 klms per year and we have to pay \$17,000 a year rego fees. The large multi nationals have the ability to “hot seat” their trucks and use them 24/7. They can easily cover from 500,000 klms and upwards per year and only have to pay the same rego fees as everyone else but use the road system more. I would like to see rego charges abolished and replaced with \$0.08c per on diesel. This amount would recoup the same amount of money collected now through rego charges and the people using the road the most would pay the most.

TOLL ROADS—Toll roads are adding enormous cost to any transport business. With the current fuel tax and rego fees we pay, the industry should not have to pay more for new roads.

TRAINING—Training is non-existent to what I would class as satisfactory. This needs to be addressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE—The lack of infrastructure across the whole country for the transport industry is atrocious. The lack of rest areas, truck stops, proper truck parking areas in both country and city areas need urgent attention if we are to stem the accident rates in the industry.

I could go on for longer but I do not have the time as I have to get in a truck and head for Sydney. I have been actively involved with the NHVR in attending their conferences regarding the fatigue laws and the changes in the NHV law.

I would be quite happy to discuss any of these points raised here and more at any time.

Thanks for the opportunity to respond.

Regards,
Graeme Nicholson
Nicholson and Page Transport.