

NHVR responses to Questions on Notice – Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

Question One:

Data: What nationally consistent data relating to vehicle accidents would you like to see collected, and which body should collect the data? Should the data be made public?

NHVR response:

As an intelligence-led and risk-based regulator, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) requires access to comprehensive heavy vehicle crash data to enable the delivery of effective and targeted national road safety outcomes.

Current data arrangements

The NHVR has agreements with state-based authorities for the sharing of registration and vehicle related information, however the agreements don't extend to the sharing of heavy vehicle crash data.

Currently, the NHVR doesn't formally receive data from state-based law enforcement agencies and authorities at the time of a crash or in a timely manner after the crash, and relies predominantly on media reports (outlined below) for the notification of incidents.

The information collected and shared by states also differs, for example NSW and QLD Police share causal details for all fatal collisions, SA Police share causal factors for noteworthy fatal collisions subject to a Major Collision Unit investigation, Tasmanian main road authorities share registration and causal details for all collisions involving a heavy vehicle and no information is received from Victorian road authorities or Victoria Police. No police forces share identifying details of the heavy vehicle involved.

The NHVR currently relies upon a process of gathering information from media reports which focus predominantly on traffic conditions and lacks detail the regulator needs; for instance, it doesn't provide details of the heavy vehicle involved, the party at fault or specific details on the cause of the incident in any structured manner or when incidents occur.

Benefits of great data sharing

The NHVR and the states have invested significantly in the development of the Safety and Compliance Regulatory Platform, which receives and analyses data feeds relating to registration information from jurisdictions and safety and compliance information collected through truck intercepts on the roadside to produce detailed information about the national heavy vehicle fleet.

By including heavy vehicle crash statistics in the Safety and Compliance Regulatory Platform, it provides a valuable opportunity to further leverage on this information and better address the causal factors that manifests into safety incidents on our roads. For instance, we can start to identify connections between infringements and defects and crashes, which will enable a targeted focus on areas we need to address from a safety education and compliance perspective.

It would also provide the ability to track how interventions can impact rates of infringements, defects and help find ways to change industry culture and behaviours. Culture is a difficult but critical area to address in delivering significant and lasting positive safety outcomes.

The NHVR has the ability to produce and share national safety bulletins across the heavy vehicle industry and with supply chain partners where we are seeing increased safety risks, which will contribute to helping eliminate and reduce safety risks and trauma.

The NHVR also has a dedicated intelligence unit that receives reports through a Heavy Vehicle Confidential Reporting line which provides an opportunity for all parties in the heavy vehicle supply chain to report safety risks. Enabling access to crash information will allow the reports received through the Confidential Reporting Line to be dealt with in a more strategic and timely manner.

The Productivity Commission in its draft report regarding National Transport Reform (November 2019) made a recommendation to better harness the collection of data for policy and regulatory purposes, including importantly the delivery of improved safety outcomes.

Types of data to be collected:

From a heavy vehicle perspective, it is important for comprehensive data collected about the heavy vehicles involved in a crash and the causal factors that have contributed to a crash. This is particularly important given that in 80% of crashes involving heavy vehicles, fault is not attributed to the heavy vehicle.

Anecdotally, some accidents are recorded as “a truck” roll over. This information provides limited insight into the type of heavy vehicle involved. It would assist the NHVR if accident reporting included load and vehicle types (double road train, modular b-triple, livestock, etc.). This will eventually provide a generic and broad view of vehicle type performance.

It would be useful for data to be collected that helps identify the causal factors of crashes where a heavy vehicle is at fault. Causal factors may include the lack of vehicle maintenance, over mass loading, insecure load, the way that the operator runs the business, medical issues/episodes, or the lack of operator safety management systems. As mentioned above, this data would help the NHVR to understand and target the root cause of the safety and/or compliance issues.

Public availability of crash data

In the interests of transparency and accountability, crash data and findings should be reported publicly on a national level provided the privacy of the parties involved in the reported crash data is safeguarded. The NHVR has the ability to present this information nationally through the NHVR website and the HVR Portal (the online tool used by the heavy vehicle industry to lodge truck access and other applications). Appropriate privacy safeguards are necessary to facilitate the provision, collection and reporting of crash data.

Question Two:

Targets: The 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-20 Report recommends the Commonwealth and states commit to an interim target of vision zero for all major capital city CBD areas, and high volume highways by 2030. Does your organisation support the Commonwealth and state governments adopting this target?

NHVR response:

The NHVR supports the Commonwealth and states committing to an interim target for vision zero. The NHVR supports any steps taken at Federal and State level that help achieve a safer road system through the shared responsibility of system designers and road users.

The NHVR is delivering a number of initiatives to help contribute to this outcome, including:

- Continuously improving the way we collect and use intelligence to embrace new and more effective approaches to target the greatest safety risks.
- Encouraging the development of the safety capabilities of industry and the broader supply chain through the practical guidance and engagement.
- Administration of the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiatives program, which funds initiatives that deliver safety benefits for the heavy vehicle industry and other road users. Some of the key campaigns are focused on improving interactions between trucks and cars, including the “*We need space, to keep you safe*” campaign.
- Recognition of modern approaches and technology that deliver improved safety outcomes, including better approaches to fatigue management and use of safer and more productive vehicles on our road network.

Question Three:

Speed Management: Does your organisation support the installation of point to point speed cameras on all Commonwealth funded roads in the future? Should the Commonwealth Government make the allocation of funding to the states conditional on this commitment being met?

NHVR response:

Crash statistics shows that 80% of fatalities involving heavy vehicles are not the fault of the heavy vehicle driver; and given the proven road safety outcomes and community acceptance of this enforcement tool, the NHVR would welcome this initiative.

The NHVR would also ask that an additional condition be included which ensures state based road agencies share the heavy vehicle point to point images and data from any commonwealth funded point to point average speed cameras in real time with the NHVR.

State based road agencies currently share images and data from 252 cameras nationally with the NHVR, but not in real time. Speeding behaviour is often linked to other areas of non-compliance, such as driver fatigue, which the NHVR is mandated to regulate and is a major contributor to serious and fatal road crashes. The use of this data, in real time, would improve monitoring of heavy vehicle driver fatigue events and support the risk-based intelligence-led enforcement strategies employed by the NHVR.

Question Four:

Road Standards: To what safety standard should all Commonwealth funded road projects be built? Should funding for projects be conditional on a particular safety standard being met?

NHVR response:

Heavy vehicle combinations developed under the Performance Based Standards (PBS) scheme and High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) provide the ability move more freight with less trips as well as providing increased safety and reduced environmental impacts.

The PBS scheme covers a large range of heavy vehicles, combinations that might be different than the vehicles prescribed in the Austroads Guide to Road Design and Austroads design vehicles (which is typically used to set safety standards on roads). Considering the Australian road freight task is growing almost twice as fast as the population, it is important to make sure that any new infrastructure has the capacity to accommodate these productive and safe combinations.

As there are more than 11,000 PBS and HPV combinations operated nationwide, the dynamic performance characteristics and the potential impacts of these combinations on the infrastructure are well defined.

To ensure the improved efficiency of existing infrastructure and providing greater access for PBS combinations and HPVs, the new infrastructure developments and infrastructure upgrades should consider the suitability of infrastructure capacity, geometric and structural constraints for PBS access Levels (from PBS Level 1 (up to 23 metres in length and 55t mass) to PBS Level 4 (up to 60 metres in length and 160t mass).

The NHVR also believes that in relation to infrastructure and design standards, appropriate consideration needs to be given to heavy vehicle rest area sites (which are critical for the heavy vehicle industry in managing fatigue requirements) and ensuring these sites can accommodate higher productivity vehicles.

We also recommend that infrastructure that meets the proposed standard is gazetted for “as of right” access by PBS and higher productivity heavy vehicles to reduce the need for transport operators to apply for permits, thereby increasing efficiency and reducing cost and administrative burden for industry.