

# **INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE HEAVY VEHICLE TRANSPORT SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY IN AUSTRALIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Australia relies heavily on road transport due to its large area and low population density in considerable parts of the country. Australia's freight logistics industry was estimated to account for 8.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, adding \$131.6 billion to Australia's economy in 2013. The domestic freight task has doubled in size over the past 20 years and a total of 2132 million tonnes of freight was moved by road in 2013-14. Forecasts indicate that the road freight task will continue to grow, estimated to nearly double by 2030 and triple by 2050, largely driven by interstate freight.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) Australia's dedicated regulator for all vehicles over 4.5 tonnes gross vehicle mass, was established in 2014 as an independent statutory corporate body under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (NHVL). The Regulator's role is to provide leadership and drive sustainable improvements to safety, productivity and efficiency across the heavy vehicle industry.

Heavy vehicle regulatory reform has been the major driver of improvements in heavy vehicle productivity over the last decades and Australia has been leading the world in the development of high-productivity freight vehicles through its unique Performance Based Standards (PBS) framework. Australia is the first country around the world that introduced a fully comprehensive set of legislations for PBS combinations. The PBS Scheme administered by NHVR approves innovative and optimised vehicle designs for high-productivity vehicles, which reduce the impact on infrastructure and increase safety for all road users. A recent study demonstrated that for PBS and high-productivity combinations there were 76 percent less accidents when compared to conventional combinations. This study also demonstrated that PBS combinations performing the same freight task with around 37 per cent fewer trucks and significantly less kilometres.

The NHVR conducts continuous research and assessment on emerging technologies in the heavy vehicle transport industry to develop policies for their adoption and application. The NHVR is delivering on a number of key national priority projects, including the digital transformation of the heavy vehicle access permit system, the development of a regulatory framework for the introduction of Electronic Work Diaries (EWDs), the development of a national scheme for heavy vehicle registration, a roadmap to boost the roadworthiness of Australia's heavy vehicle fleet, a national plan to streamline compliance information and link

compliance systems across jurisdictions. These projects will result in efficient industry regulations to enable greater safety and productivity outcomes.

NHVR is also responsible for the operation of the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme that provides flexibility in managing fatigue and concessions for mass and maintenance, for transport operators that have robust and auditable management system in place.

The presentation will discuss the history, the future, the successes and the challenges of the Performance Based regulatory approach and review the major projects currently undertaken by NHVR.