



MEDIA RELEASE

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VTA calls for heavy vehicle licencing review

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA) has called for a review of the state's heavy vehicle licensing system in a bid to improve skills and training, lift safety standards and attract young drivers to the industry.

"We need urgent reform to our heavy vehicle licencing system to improve qualifications and safety standards through the introduction of skills-based training, that will embed the necessary competencies and capabilities into drivers. Such measures will help reduce the shortage of drivers by attracting young people to the industry who are looking for a career in a safe and attractive workplace as a professional truck driver," said VTA CEO Peter Anderson.

"Under the current system the bar has been set too low for getting a heavy vehicle driver licence, and we have genuine concerns licences are being issued to drivers who do not have the necessary skills and abilities to safely operate larger trucks that are increasingly complex," he said.

For a new truck driver to get a heavy vehicle licence in Victoria all they need is to have a current Victorian car licence, meet medical standards and pass an eye test, and pass minimal levels of heavy vehicle knowledge and skills tests from an authorised trainer.

"VicRoads recommends having '[enough practice so that your driving skills are adequate](#)', but since there are no minimum requirements for this, all that's needed is completion of a five-hour course. We feel this underprepares drivers for the heightened safety risks that are a product of the growing freight task, greater road congestion and soaring population growth."

Mr Anderson said improvements to Victoria's heavy vehicle licensing system could be modelled on the subsidised intensive eight-day course the VTA runs in conjunction with Armstrongs Driver Training that provides over 60 hours of training, mentoring and behind the-wheel experience to new drivers.

"A major focus for the VTA is promoting a culture of professionalism to help attract young people to a rewarding and lifelong career in transport. The present shortage of drivers is also a function of the aging population, and with ABS Labour Force Survey data suggesting nearly half of the current workforce in the industry will be 65 or over within 10 years, and with freight volumes expected to double over the same period, the urgency of attracting young, skilled people to the industry has never been greater."

Mr Anderson said with so much infrastructure planned and being built in residential areas, people rightly expect that truck drivers working in their communities have the skills needed to safely navigate the roads. He also said that the current licensing system in Victoria meant visitors to Australia could easily get a heavy vehicle permit, provided they met basic visa and car licencing criteria.

"This has created a silent underclass of transport workers being employed by operators that are desperate for skilled drivers but are starved for choice, and who are possibly vulnerable to underpayment from the few rogue operators out there who are ambivalent about exploiting people who don't know their rights."

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