



MEDIA RELEASE

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Industry should welcome Senate Inquiry into Road Transport Industry

Growing commercial pressures in domestic and international supply chains in the form of greater demands and expectations from customers, road fatalities and injuries, safety standards and working conditions are just a handful of the many issues confronting the road transport industry today.

They are also front and centre in the Terms of Reference of a Senate Inquiry into the Road Transport Industry that was recently announced, and which the Victorian Transport Association, along with other freight and logistics groups, played a key role in getting off the ground.

The Inquiry has come about after a series of Transport Industry Standard Forums held earlier this year with the strong backing of Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety Glenn Sterle. Glenn has been a passionate advocate for improving our industry through sensible reform for decades – both as a former driver and now a Senator in the Australian Parliament.

The Forums proved to be a vital step in the formulation of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. They provided an opportunity to capture the opinions of all industry stakeholders including national and state-based industry associations, large, medium and small employers, employee representatives and other stakeholders.

The VTA was an active participant in the Forums and naturally welcomes the recent announcement from Senator Sterle of the approval of the Road Transport Industry Senate Inquiry.

The VTA would like to acknowledge the work of Senator Sterle, who was instrumental in the establishment of this inquiry and the development of the Terms of Reference which have been formulated following months of discussions, including the two Transport Industry Standard Forums.

The Terms of Reference developed are extensive and comprise of issues of importance to both employers, owner-drivers and employees.

They include issues surrounding the safety of road transport infrastructure, improving safety policies and procedures, remuneration and the impacts that differing regulation and legislation across state and territory jurisdictions is having on the industry.

Establishing minimum standards of operation and sustainable working conditions, formalising education and training and understanding the impact new technologies are having are among the other issues featuring in the Terms of Reference which will be probed in the Inquiry.

We are especially pleased that training and education feature as prominently in the Terms of Reference as they do, given our Association's strong advocacy for training to help attract and retain new, professional drivers to a career in transport.

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Competency-based education and training is essential to encourage young people to join our industry.

The establishment of a formal consultative relationship between industry and all levels of government is another critical Term of Reference the Inquiry will consider.

There is a clear shared desire within the transport industry to create a harmonious and equitable environment that is in tune with the community, and the Inquiry will play a critical role in strengthening these ties.

This inquiry is a great example of how we can work constructively together to achieve solutions that will benefit all stakeholders – and this will provide a unique opportunity to just that.

It will be used to inform Government, in the committee's final report, of the exact changes that need to be made in regard to the Terms of Reference in order to improve conditions and outcomes for all industry participants including transport workers, sub-contractors and owner-operators, business owners and suppliers, and to make our industry more sustainable and safer.

It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure the correct legislative and regulatory frameworks are in place to anticipate and overcome the existing and future challenges in the industry, which is why it is encouraging that Government has recognised that action is required.

That said, it is important to note we are not calling for more regulation, rather for support of sensible reform that will deliver positive outcomes for the industry.

Operators and the transport industry in general need the sense of security knowing that they can confidently invest in their business and their people. We look forward to this inquiry delivering the necessary and positive changes to ensure the industry is viable, safe, sustainable and efficient.

Peter Anderson
CEO, VTA

This column appears in the November issue of Prime Mover magazine.

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