



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Prioritise training over experience: VTA**

The Victorian Transport Association is advocating for a nationally-consistent, competency-based heavy vehicle licensing regime that prioritises training over experience in its response to Austroads' National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework [Consultation RIS](#) (Regulation Impact Statement).

In a wide-ranging submission, the VTA reiterated industry concerns that the current licensing system does not produce the safety standards or skill levels that meets community and industry expectations.

"Under the current time-based graduated system, an aspiring driver can only attain the entry level heavy vehicle license at the earliest age of 19, after holding a car license for a year," said VTA CEO Peter Anderson. "It then takes another year to graduate to the next level and a further year still before a license can be granted for all heavy vehicles on Australian roads.

"This has led to a situation where the necessary skills and competencies are being learned on-the-job rather than prior to taking the job. This is one of the basic deficiencies with the current licensing system, whose focus is on assessment rather than effective heavy vehicle driver training."

In its submission, the VTA expressed concern that heavy vehicle licensing is not sufficiently focused on risk, presenting safety challenges for all road users.

"Heavy vehicle crashes are serious because of their size and weight, regardless of who is at fault," Anderson said. "It is the skill, knowledge and training of the driver that maintains a safe outcome for all road users. However, while the current system satisfies the criteria of our institutionalised licensing system, it is not recognised by industry as being able to produce competent, safe, low risk drivers."

The submission was critical of the inability of statutory authorities to provide license applicants with the skills, knowledge, and training to ensure they can drive a heavy vehicle in a safe and low risk manner.

"The proposed structure in the Consultation RIS does not create the capacity of licensed drivers to operate a heavy vehicle in a safe and low risk manner thus not addressing the need for in-depth training" Anderson said.

"Given licensing services are consumed by those wanting to enter the road transport industry, heavy vehicle licensing should also adequately prepare applicants by ensuring that they receive adequate Behind the Wheel training in driving environments they are likely to be exposed to on a daily basis."

On this measure, the VTA rejected Austroads' proposal for lack of practical time behind the wheel.

"The proposed 6-10 hours behind the wheel training for rigid license holders is totally insufficient and does not provide adequate time to effectively cover the 130 plus areas and competencies required to produce a safe, low risk heavy vehicle driver. This is a major limitation and deficiency of the Austroads proposal," Anderson said.

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The VTA submission advocates for focussed training at the 'front end' of the licensing process, with adequate time to ensure candidates are well trained before being engaged as a professional driver.

"We acknowledge that candidates will require further on-boarding, but the necessary training needs to be provided at the beginning of a candidate pursuing a heavy vehicle license," Anderson said.

The submission also reaffirmed VTA support and advocacy for young people to be trained at an early age as a heavy vehicle driver, putting it at odds with Austroads and its Consultation RIS.

"The RIS is dismissive of accommodating 'young drivers' in the training and licensing system," Anderson said. "Whilst the document acknowledges 'some industry members are wanting to explore opportunities to introduce young drivers to heavy vehicle driving at an earlier age', it indicates driving heavy vehicles at an earlier age is not under active consideration, which is disheartening.

"We acknowledge young drivers will need to be carefully screened for 'attitude, aptitude and awareness' but it can be done as a means of prequalifying for admission into a heavy vehicle training course. This is essential if we are serious about retaining and providing career pathways for young people and ensuring that we have properly trained heavy vehicle drivers for the future," he said.

**Ends...**

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