



MEDIA RELEASE

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Road network, minimum standards, cybersecurity headline day one of State Conference 2024

Strategies to permanently maintain Victoria's road network, cybersecurity and associated risks of IT systems being compromised, and the recently passed minimum standards legislation, dominated the opening sessions of the Victorian Transport Association's State Conference 2024, being held at Silverwater Resort, Phillip Island where over 200 delegates have gathered for two days of important talks.

VTA CEO Peter Anderson delivered the keynote opening address where he set the tone under the **Future Freight Landscapes** conference theme in remarks that advocated for a permanent forward-thinking regime for repairing and maintaining Victoria's road transport network.

"There will never be enough money to fully maintain our roads to the standard that we all want them to be, but the real issue is how do we get the best bang for our buck to keep the roads maintained so it's not costing operators time and money in repairs and maintenance to heavy vehicles to service our customers using the roads that are available," Anderson said.

"What we're proposing is that we change the process and forward look towards our road infrastructure being efficient and meeting the standard that we all expect. Those roads need to work, they need to work well, and people need to have confidence to drive and not fear having to slow down from 100 to 60.

"The real issue for us is the fact that we could do it better. If we followed a plan, if we had dedicated road crews that eventually would be able to remediate kilometres of roads. There's no reason why we couldn't look forward to the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years to change the construction, boundaries parameters, and make the road stronger going forward," Anderson said.

On the issue of cybersecurity, Dr Derek Bopping of the Australian Signals Directorate urged operators not to be complacent on data breaches, despite the transport industry being outside the top 10 sectors to experience breaches. His keynote presentation detailed the Australian Government's strategies for identifying and mitigating cyber threats.

"And you might draw some comfort to know that the transport logistics industry is not in the top 10 sectors or industries that report to us. But I would offer to you that that there is no reason whatsoever for complacency," Dr Bopping said.

"There are several reasons why the transport industry is an attractive target. The first is that just like any other industry, data underpins this industry. The top types of data that are exposed in branches from office all the way through and we've had many not just the ones you read about paper or contact data, identity data, financial data and commercially sensitive data. You don't need me to tell you that that's the underpinning of your business as well. If the cyber criminal's data is just money in a different form, it's monetized asset.

"The second, and it's been mentioned before this morning, is that this sector contains many small and medium businesses that we would say operate below, quote the cycle of poverty line and buy them on," Dr Bopping said.

In a video address, Federal Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Senator Carol Brown, discussed recent achievements in licencing reform and the National Heavy Vehicle Charging Pilot.

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“Since I last spoke to you, Austroads has continued developing plans for the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework. Among the changes being considered are new progression pathways for licensing based on experience, allowing drivers to obtain higher licence classes more rapidly. We want a workforce who is fulfilled and rewarded. All jurisdictions have now accepted the reform in principle, and Austroads will continue to engage with industry to deliver this reform,” Senator Brown said.

“The Government is also trialling fairer ways to fund Australia’s roads under the National Heavy Vehicle Charging Pilot. We want to ensure we’ve got a system that’s sustainable and works for those who use it. We’re currently partnering with business operators to install telematics devices to test how a distance-based charging system may work,” she said.

A dedicated panel on minimum standards and the closing the loopholes legislation was moderated by Senator Glenn Sterle and featured Peter Anderson as ARTIO National Secretary, NatRoads CEO Warren Clark, and Transport Workers’ Union Strategic Campaigner Jack Boutrous.

The panel presenters fielded numerous questions from the delegates about the legislation and what it would mean for safety and workplace productivity.

Over 30 speakers will address delegates over the remaining day of the conference on productivity, skills and training, and technology. The conference concludes Tuesday 19 March.

Ends...

For further information please contact Brian O’Neil on 0411 055 284.