

MEDIA RELEASE



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A CRITICAL STEP TOWARD NATIONAL TRUCKING LAWS AND LESS RED TAPE

The Australian Government has taken a critical step toward national trucking laws, which could boost the safety of the trucking industry, reduce freight costs and slash red tape for trucking companies.

Its critical step forward is the release of its consultation paper on a possible national framework for regulating, registering and licensing heavy vehicles and truck drivers.

The Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, Trevor Martyn, said the consultation paper recognised the industry's concerns about the red tape and inconsistent laws now imposed on the trucking industry.

"The trucking industry carries 75 per cent of Australia's freight, but we are currently subject to eight different sets of laws and nine different registration systems. It's a full time job for transport operators to keep up with the paperwork," Mr Martyn said.

"Since the election of the Rudd Government, we have been pressing for a single set of national trucking laws, a national registration system and a national truck driver licensing system.

"Today's consultation paper is a critical step toward this goal. It sets out some of the many inconsistencies in the existing state laws, which range from differences in their black letter law to differences in the way transport inspectors interpret the same laws by the side of the road.

For example, the paper points to examples where:

- an operator moving heavy equipment under permit between three states had to fit an extra axle in the second state and then remove it again when the truck entered the third state to comply with its permit conditions; and
- transport inspectors in one state refused to accept that a vehicle was roadworthy, even though it had been inspected and approved in another state under the same roadworthiness guidelines.

"The paper reaches the welcome conclusion that the industry needs to be able to operate on a national basis, with regulations that will allow us to use the latest and safest equipment. It is the best way that we can carry the growing amount of freight that Australians want us to deliver.

"The paper considers four options for delivering a single national regulatory system and comes down in favour of the position taken by the ATA: it recommends there should be uniform laws administered by a single, national statutory regulator.

"It confirms, however, that the national laws should include discretionary arrangements to recognise that different parts of Australia, such as regional Western Australia, have different operating conditions to other parts of the country.

"The Government will now hold a series of consultation meetings about the proposal with trucking operators. If adopted, the first stage of the new laws would come into effect at the end of 2010," Mr Martyn said.

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National Voice of the Australian Trucking Industry