

MEDIA RELEASE



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TRUCKING INDUSTRY CALLS FOR UNIFORM PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The trucking industry has called for uniform public holidays across Australia, as businesses and federal government departments in Canberra prepare to shut down for the Family and Community Day holiday tomorrow.

The Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, Trevor Martyn, said the different public holidays in each state and territory were a totally unnecessary burden on Australian businesses, including the trucking industry.

“The Family and Community Day public holiday in Canberra is just one example of the inconsistent public holidays that cause scheduling difficulties across Australia,” Mr Martyn said.

“During today, the trucking industry will pick up consignments bound for Canberra and our trucks will roll down the Barton and Federal highways to the national capital. But because of the public holiday tomorrow, many of those products will need to be unloaded and stored, or kept on their semi-trailers until they can be delivered on Wednesday.

“We then have to juggle our equipment to make sure we can keep delivering for the rest of our customers, even though we have trucks and trailers parked in Canberra doing nothing.

“In short, the inconsistent public holiday means we end up double-handling goods. Our staff and equipment stand idle while there is work to be done, which reduces the efficiency of the whole transport system.

“Labour Day is another classic example this problem. In 2009, Labour Day was the second of March in Western Australia, the ninth of March in Tasmania and Victoria, the fourth of May in the Northern Territory and Queensland, and the fifth of October in New South Wales, South Australia and the ACT,” he said.

Mr Martyn said the Council of Australian Governments had agreed in 1993 to establish uniform public holidays, but that little progress had been made.

“In June 1993, more than 16 years ago, COAG announced that achieving uniform public holidays was an important microeconomic reform. It announced that a working group of officials would examine the observance of Labour Day, make recommendations about a common date, and report back to the next meeting. As far as we can tell, nothing was ever done,” Mr Martyn said.

“As a first step in getting this issue back on the agenda, the ATA has written to the Treasurer today, proposing that the Productivity Commission should hold an inquiry into the cost of Australia’s inconsistent public holidays.”

Mr Martyn emphasised that the ATA was not arguing for a reduction in the number of public holidays.

“Our argument is that public holidays should be held on the same days throughout Australia, with the exception of show days and race days such as the Melbourne Cup,” he said.

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National Voice of the Australian Trucking Industry