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### **A Missed Opportunity.....**

Australian governments, both federal and state, are currently spending record amounts of money on infrastructure projects, building new and expanding existing transport networks, particularly in the East Coast states of our nation. This work is largely overdue and much needed to support the needs of our growing population, predicted to pass the 30 million mark by 2030.

The Truck Industry Council (TIC) applauds this infrastructure spend, particularly the money that has been committed to improving our road network. Trucks will continue to carry the majority of freight around our nation be it long haul, intercity deliveries or urban distribution. The increasing freight task is a key driver for the infrastructure spend with its objective of underpinning strong economic growth and making the transportation of freight safer and more efficient. These road projects will benefit all Australian consumers who rely on trucks for the delivery of food, medication, fuel, goods and services, etc.

TIC has however, pointed out to government that spending big on roads (and rail) addresses only half of the problem. The key enabler of this record infrastructure spend, the trucks (and freight locomotives) that will use these new roads (and rail lines) are old, very old, by world standards. The average age of our country's truck fleet is 14.9 years and the trend is upward, put simply, our truck park continues to age. Our freight rail locos are even older. The reality for Government is the failure in policy terms of its own strategic objectives be they for road safety, environmental, or economic through improved freight efficiencies, despite its record investment in freight infrastructure.

Incentivising the take-up of newer trucks would take “political will”, something that is apparently missing in the Australian political arena in this day and age. One such method that could be employed by government to reduce our truck fleet age would be to stipulate a maximum age for the trucks used in these new government funded infrastructure projects. A simple line or two in these infrastructure contracts could ensure that older, less safe, more polluting and less productive heavy vehicles would not be deployed on these construction sites. This approach has been suggested by TIC to the Eastern State governments, however this simple and effective action, that would see government leading by example in the fleet renewal process, has been ignored by these three States. Trucks of any age are eligible for these contracts.

TIC has presented the safety, environmental and productivity benefits of “capping” the age of trucks use for these projects. For example, if the cap was set at post-2007, this would allow trucks up to 11 years old to participate. These trucks would typically be fitted with such safety features as Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS), Euro R29 Cabin Strength and Front Under-run Protection Systems (FUPS), their engines would comply with Euro IV or V (or equivalent) emission standards and these trucks would be eligible for HML and PBS schemes and allowed to carry 6.5t on their front axles, making each vehicle more

productive. These trucks would also be quieter in operation, benefiting from ADR83 noise compliance, very important for trucks operating 24/7 in urban environments. The States rejected this proposal, opting instead to allow trucks of any age, many with few, if any, advanced safety features and little, or no, emission or noise control, to operate daily in our populated suburbs. The older of these trucks pre-date Road Friendly Suspension (RFS) compliance, the pre-requisite for HML and PBS schemes that allow a truck to carry more payload. Less payload requires more trucks to carry the spoil, or concrete, etc for these projects. More trucks lead to more traffic congestion and the increased likelihood of crashes, all because government lacks “political will”.

The inaction of our governments on this simple, but key initiative, is nothing short of disappointing and represents a significant missed opportunity to improve the safety, environmental and economic performance of our nation’s truck fleet.

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