



Prime Mover Magazine – June 2018 Issue.

Enabling Road Infrastructure Spending

The May 2019 federal budget again showed the Australian Government continued commitment to infrastructure investment. This investment in freight infrastructure continues a trend that goes back to the days of the Federal Government's Auslink policy in the early 2000's with its objective of better planning, developing and managing Australia's national land transport infrastructure.

Australia faces an ever increasing freight task, said to double over the next twenty years, and brought about by the needs and wants of an Australian population projected to be 30 million by 2030. The message from Auslink all those years ago, that still remains current today, is that going forward there will be enough freight to move for all modes of transport. Trucks will continue to carry the majority of freight around our nation be it long haul, intercity deliveries or urban distribution. This increasing freight task is driving the infrastructure spend with its objective of underpinning strong economic growth and making the transportation of freight safer and more efficient.

The Australian Government's mantra back in 2004, in terms of land transport policy, was to ensure a strong national economy by "getting freight from the farm gate to the export market" as efficiently and effectively as possible. This refrain very much rings true today and we could add "getting those on-line ordered goods to the consumer expediently" to add a 2018 context to the discussion. The point to be made here is that while Australian Governments build and upgrade 21st century road infrastructure to improve freight productivity, the enablers of this infrastructure, the truck, does so not as efficiently or effectively as it could because of its average age and its lack of advanced technologies.

The Truck Industry Council's National Truck Plan aims to modernise the nation's truck fleet and bring about productivity gains for operators thus maximising the Government's infrastructure spend. The two go hand in hand yet the focus to date has been upon only half the equation. The Truck Industry Council has long called for the Federal Government to take the necessary steps to encourage operators to modernise their ageing fleets. These steps include for example, financial incentives to purchase a new vehicle and regulatory changes allowing higher axle masses for new ADR 80/03 or later; diesel and alternatively fuelled or powered trucks.

Having the Government support the objective of a more modern truck fleet by means of incentives for operators to upgrade their fleets will speed up the introduction of technologies. There is a role for all governments, state and federal, in this discussion and I encourage transport ministers to look to the road safety, environmental and productivity benefits that would accrue from a more modern Australian truck fleet.

Truck Industry Council Limited

ABN 37 097 387 954

T: (02) 6273 3222 E: admin@truck-industry-council.org W: www.truck-industry-council.org

It is fair enough for Government to say that the modernisation of the nation's truck fleet, while desirable, should be driven by market forces and natural attrition. The market has spoken, the evidence is in. Australia has one of the oldest truck fleets in the world. The average age of our truck's today is 14.9 years and the trend is upward, our truck fleet continues to grow older. The reality for Government is the failure in policy terms of its own strategic objectives be they for road safety, environmental or economic despite its record investment in freight infrastructure. The choice is not whether Australia uses trucks, they are essential to our standard of living, the choice for the Australian people is whether we have the most modern fleet possible.

The implications are profound: Australian's can have modern, safer, more environmentally friendly and productivity trucks on our roads, or we can continue with an old Australian truck fleet.

An older Australian truck fleet means that technology advances found in today's modern trucks such as intelligent transport systems, safety and environmental technologies, are not being introduced into the Australian market in a timely manner. Australian's want to be sure that trucks on our roads today comprise a modern truck fleet. Settling for less would be to agree that it was acceptable to go to a hospital and receive treatment from 15 year and older medical technology. We wouldn't settle for that and nor should we accept an old Australian truck fleet.

Phil Taylor
President, Truck Industry Council