



Prime Mover Magazine – TIC Article for March 2020 Issue.

Clearing the Air

Vehicle emission zones are not new, the United Kingdom first introduced the city of London emission zone back in February 2008 for trucks and busses over 3.5tonnes GVM. Then those vehicles needed to be Euro III or later. Over the years the scheme has gradually tightened, in January 2012 Euro IV or later was the minimum requirement and then in April 2019 London announced a plan for the world’s toughest vehicle emissions standard in central London to help reduce toxic air pollution and protect public health. From October 2020, commercial vehicles over 3.5 tonnes will need to meet Euro VI standards or face a charge of £100 (AU\$193) per day to access London. This much publicised Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) will be introduced to help address London’s toxic air health crisis that currently leads to thousands of premature deaths annually, and increases the risk of asthma, cancer and dementia.

Around the globe there are many other examples of Low Emission Zones (LEZ), Germany has no fewer than 47 LEZs in operation or in planning, other European countries that have LEZs include, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden. In Asia, Japan, Singapore and even China have LEZs in force in areas where historically high vehicle pollution does, or has, existed. While in the United States of America, the State of California was one of the first regions in the world to introduce LEZ’s for trucks and busses, firstly in Los Angeles and then in other Californian cities. Many of these LEZs tend to work differently, some totally ban older emission trucks from specified areas and apply heavy fines, or even vehicle deregistration, for repeat offenders, while other schemes allow more polluting vehicles to access however charge a significant entrance fee or tax, making continued long term access less attractive to operators of old polluting vehicles. The common themes and outcomes that all LEZ’s have are, newer vehicles accessing these areas, less pollution and better health outcomes for residents, workers and passers-by in these districts.

The Truck Industry Council (TIC) has been a long-time advocate for reducing the age of our Australian truck fleet, pointing out to State and Federal government here the negative impacts that an old truck fleet has on road safety outcomes, road freight productivity, the environment and in particular the adverse health impacts for all Australians. Hence TIC was pleased to hear that a road access curfew proposed jointly by the Victorian Transport Association (VTA) and the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) was going to be

introduced in Victoria. In July 2019, the Andrews government in conjunction with VicRoads, the VTA, MTAG and the Maribyrnong City Council, announced plans for the Smart Freight Partnership – Inner West. The government release included, "An Australian-first package of cleaner freight and road safety actions", part of which includes an "Environment Freight Zone established in Melbourne's inner west". The initiative, whilst introducing new curfews for certain trucks, encourages the uptake of cleaner vehicles to deliver safer conditions for drivers and residents as a way of counteracting those restrictions. Principally the incentives were to be increased road access times for newer, cleaner, safer trucks. Trucks manufactured on or after January 1, 2010 that meet stricter emission control standards (Australian Design Rule 80/03 or Euro V and equivalents) would have three hours more access on weekdays than pre-2010 trucks and two hours more time on Saturdays. "The curfew changes were aimed to strike a balance for the local community and transport operators by addressing concerns about safety, noise and air quality, while keeping freight moving effectively", the Victorian government said at the time.

Pre-Christmas 2019, the parties to the agreement were informed by the Victorian state government that it would not go ahead with the Smart Freight Initiative. Details of why the plan has been scrapped appear sketchy at best, however VTA chief executive Peter Anderson, has pointed the blame at Victorian public servants "To me the biggest stumbling block isn't the government ... it's the ability to be able to be supported by the bureaucracy. They're the ones stopping this, it's not the Ministers," he said.

This is an extremely disappointing outcome, an opportunity to improve road freight vehicle safety and environmental outcomes in a community crying out for assistance has been scuttled, seemingly by the inability of the bureaucracy to deliver on the wishes of their masters, elected Ministers. If this proves to be the case, a worrying precedent has been set.

Tony McMullan

CEO, Truck Industry Council