



Prime Mover Magazine – TIC Article for May 2020 Issue.

We Only Have One Planet

Recent and continuing events surrounding the global spread of the COVID-19 virus, leading to the declaration of a worldwide pandemic, have shown us all how quickly life can change on our planet. I am pleased to see all those involved in the road transport industry banding together to keep vital food and medical supplies stocked on shelves, essential services like garbage collection continue and emergency vehicles ready to roll. The Truck Industry Council (TIC) members and their dealers are supporting those efforts, providing parts and servicing to keep existing trucks safely on our roads and providing new truck sales for an increasing freight task, particularly last mile deliveries of food and other important supplies to those isolating.

Australia, along with the rest of the world, is facing a long road ahead and there will be much to say moving forward on this pandemic. In just a few short weeks, COVID-19 highlighted that there are some events that affect all of us living on this one planet. Issues that know no boundaries, are not stopped by country borders, nor divided by oceans. Another such issue, that I touched on in my column last month, is CO₂ emissions. Far less of a threat in the short term, but the long-term effects could be just as significant for generations to come. Now I am not going to get involved in a debate about global warming, but simply acknowledge that both major political parties in our country are committed to meeting international obligations that Australia has made to reduce its CO₂ emissions.

In this regard, Australia has and continues to make, tangible reductions in such areas as power generation, the commercial and residential building sectors, and manufacturing. This is not the case in the transport sector overall, including the heavy vehicle road freight industry. Government initiatives, such as the Energy Reduction Fund, have failed to deliver any worthwhile CO₂ savings for road transport. Many commentators are “talking up” battery electric and hydrogen powered trucks as the solution and while these vehicles will definitely play their part in the future, with TIC members at the forefront of introducing this equipment, the mass take-up of such vehicles is likely to be somewhat off yet due to current cost-to-benefit factors and the maturity of some of these technologies.

There are however, CO₂ savings that could be realised by industry today, save for some regulatory road blocks. Government should be fostering these “here and now” solutions by removing the barriers that currently exist. Examples include:

- A move to Euro VI by mandating this in a new ADR for heavy vehicles. A number of TIC members have provided TIC with fuel consumption data that shows typically a 5 to 10 percent fuel consumption benefit (and hence a 5 to 10 percent CO₂ saving) for the latest Euro VI trucks over comparable Euro V trucks. This data has been gathered by in-vehicle telematics systems from thousands of Euro VI trucks verses thousands of Euro V trucks operating in similar conditions in Australia over the past couple of years. The mandating of Euro VI requires political leadership and “will”.
- Road authority data shows that approximately 50 percent of articulated truck movements on the Hume Highway, Australia’s busiest road freight route, are undertaken by single trailer “Semis”, whilst the other half are B-doubles and a handful of PBS high productivity vehicle combinations. For an equivalent amount of freight moved on a B-double combination there is a 24 percent reduction in CO₂ compared to moving that freight on a Semi. There is huge potential for carbon savings by moving freight from Semi’s to B-doubles, not just on the Hume, but on many of our nation’s roads. However, smaller operators need to ensure that they have enough freight to regularly fully load a B-double combination to make the move to a longer combination vehicle economically viable. Means and methods to assist the consolidation of freight for smaller operators and owner drivers is required. Also, National B-double registration charges are three times higher than those for a Semi-trailer, yet a B-double carries only approximately 43 percent more freight. Government registration charging equality is required.

The above are a couple of examples of immediate CO₂ savings that could be realised in the road transport industry pending favourable government action.

Tony McMullan

CEO, Truck Industry Council