

# COMMUNIQUE

## Transport & Logistics Industry moves a step closer to a national Heavy Vehicle Driving Apprenticeship

### 1. Background

The Australian Freight industry has been discussing the need to professionalise the heavy vehicle industry for many years. A key element of this conversation has been the merits or otherwise of introducing a national apprenticeship for heavy vehicle drivers in much the same way as apprenticeships operate in other industries like construction. In recent months, the Transport and Logistics Industry Reference Committee (IRC) and Australian Industry Standards (AIS) have examined the merits of establishing an apprenticeship model for heavy vehicle drivers.

The findings of this work were documented in a report and circulated to all industry stakeholders with a view to assessing industry support for this proposal. The consultation was undertaken in September and October 2021 and included a national webinar on 8 October 2021, providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss the proposal.

The extensive industry consultation process is now complete. This communique discusses the nature of the feedback received and foreshadows the next step in the professionalisation journey.

### 2. Key points

#### a. **The level of industry engagement on this issue was the highest of any consultation conducted by the Transport & Logistics Industry Reference Committee in many years**

- Australian industry Standards received a significant number of written submissions from a wide range of industry stakeholders, including small, medium and large transport enterprise, NatRoad, the Australian Trucking Association, and State/Territory Transport Associations
- The associated industry webinar was attended by approximately 200 delegates and members of the IRC fielded 100 questions during the 1 hour webinar.
- Transport and Logistics IRC Chair said, "The level of industry engagement in this issue is the highest I have seen of any of the industry consultations that have been conducted during my time as IRC Chair".

#### b. **There is very strong industry support for the professionalisation of the Heavy Vehicle Drivers via an apprenticeship model with many industry stakeholders arguing that such an approach has the potential to change community perceptions about the occupation, potentially assisting with the attraction of younger people to the profession in the future.**

- Many stakeholders suggested that the establishment of an apprenticeship provides an opportunity to change community perceptions about the occupation, potentially assisting with the attraction of younger people to the profession in the future.

- Warren Clark, CEO of NatRoad, says the organisation has consistently expressed its strong support for improved driver training comprising of a nationally recognised qualification combined with supervised on-the-job experience and a move to competency based licensing arrangements. He also asserts that the establishment of an apprenticeship for heavy vehicle drivers would create an attribute of professionalism that could be harnessed by transport enterprise to attract new workers in the medium to long term.
- The South Australian Roads Transport Association (SARTA) suggest that the establishment of a HV Driver Apprenticeship will lift the perception of industry and the job of a HV driver to a position of a respectable trade which in turn will offer an attractive career pathway and begin to facilitate the essential increase of new younger entrants to the industry.
- SARTA Executive Director, Steve Shearer, suggests that the HV industry has proven, unequivocally, throughout the COVID Pandemic, how vital a safe and efficient HV industry is in sustaining the economy and the Community. “If we do not build the bridge between the school system and the industry through an apprenticeship model, we will be unable to sustain the vital role of trucking in underpinning the national economy. “

**c. At its meeting on 21 October 2021, and after considering all the stakeholder feedback received, the IRC recommended that a national apprenticeship be established by utilising the existing Certificate III in Driving operations (TLI 31221).**

- This recommendation will initiate a plan for further targeted consultation and involve engagement with the Commonwealth, State Training Authorities, Regulators and Insurers to inform the way forward.
- The IRC acknowledges that a series of implementation issues will need to be addressed as part of this work. These issues include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Transition arrangements for the current Traineeship
  - Nominal term for the apprenticeship and flexibility
  - Financial and supervisory implications for employers
  - Suitability of apprenticeship for Bus and Dangerous Goods sectors
  - Insurance premiums for under 25 year old drivers
  - Age-based versus competency-based licensing arrangements
  - Pre-apprenticeship pathways

**d. The IRC noted that this action will not be the panacea to the significant labour force challenges currently being experienced within the heavy vehicle sector but believe the establishment of a national apprenticeship for this occupation to be an important ‘first step’ in addressing this issue.**

- The IRC Noted that the establishment of a Heavy Vehicle Driving Apprenticeship will:
  - Be the first step towards professionalising the heavy vehicle transport industry
  - Be free from mandate in any state/territory without industry agreement

- Be assigned a nominal term/duration (2 - 4 years) with completion based on achievement of competency. It will allow a varied and flexible term to accommodate entrants with previous study/work experience (RPL, mature aged HV operators).
  - Utilise current wage arrangements in the Heavy Vehicle Transport sector in the absence of an apprenticeship wage structure as occurs in many industry awards.
- While aware of the challenges that lie ahead with the establishment of an apprenticeship for heavy vehicle truck drivers, the IRC members have confirmed their support for the model.
    - Peter Anderson, IRC member and CEO of the Victorian Transport Association, stated that the proposed Heavy Vehicle Driving Apprenticeship is "...a positive step to bringing young people into a vital industry".
    - IRC and Australian Trucking Association member, Julie Russell (Russell Transport Pty Ltd) confirms that the Road Transport industry "... provides an essential service that continues to grow, attracting new entrants to our industry. An apprenticeship scheme provides a safe and supported pathway for entrants to develop skills and knowledge across a gamut of tasks undertaken both in and around on-road activities."

**Mark McKenzie**



Chair, Transport and Logistics Industry Reference Committee

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## **About AIS**

AIS is focused on future skilling of Australia's workforce. It works in partnership with industry, the VET sector and governments to further Australia's prosperity and competitiveness through lifelong learning of Australians.

AIS transforms careers through the power of skills and draws on its 20 years of world-class, in-house technical expertise and extensive industry networks to deliver solutions for industry. It undertakes research and data analysis to inform intelligence modelling; develops the national occupational standards for a range of critical industries, as well as skills and workforce development solutions – nationally and across the globe.

## **Contacts**

Ron Horne  
Industry Skills Manager  
[ron.horne@aistnds.org.au](mailto:ron.horne@aistnds.org.au)  
T (03) 9604 7232 | M 0448 166 536

Lisa Giammarco  
Project Manager, HV Driving Apprenticeship  
[Lisa.Giammarco@aisglobal.org.au](mailto:Lisa.Giammarco@aisglobal.org.au)  
M: 0427 582 830

## **Media contact**

Charles David  
Stakeholder & Media Relations Manager  
[charles.david@aistnds.org.au](mailto:charles.david@aistnds.org.au)  
T (03) 9604 7200 | M 0427 990 147