NHVR
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

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Office of Road Safety
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NHVR SUBMISSION – *NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY 2021-2030*

I would like to congratulate the Office of Road Safety on the development of the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* and I appreciate the opportunity for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to provide comment. Please see our comments attached.

The *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* (NRSS) provides a solid foundation to improve road outcomes for all road users and to progress towards Vision Zero. The NHVR acknowledges and supports the need to look beyond road safety agencies to improve road safety outcomes. Sustainable improvements in road safety can only be achieved when the responsibility for improved safety outcomes is shared across industry, government and the community.

In line with these goals, the NHVR is developing a Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy 2021-2025 aimed toward improving heavy vehicle safety outcomes and contributing to the road safety targets set out in the NRSS.

The NHVR looks forward to working with the Office of Road Safety, other jurisdictional and regulatory partners, the heavy vehicle industry and the broader community to improve road safety outcomes over the life of the NRSS and beyond.

Should you require any further information about the NHVR's submission, please contact [redacted]

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Sal Petroccitto
Chief Executive Officer

Enc. (1): Draft *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* – Submission to the Office of Road Safety

NHVR
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

Submission to the Office of Road Safety

23 March 2021

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's purpose and functions are established by the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL). Our activities are guided by the statutory mandate to achieve the objects of the HVNL, which includes safety as our key priority. The NHVR provides leadership to, and works collaboratively with, industry and partner agencies to drive sustainable improvements to safety outcomes across the Australian heavy vehicle road transport sector.

What is your primary area of interest in road safety?

The NHVR's primary objective is to promote public safety. We are committed to reducing the number of crashes, fatalities and injuries across the heavy vehicle road transport industry and its supply chain. The NHVR is a partner in delivering the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* (NRSS) and is specifically responsible for leading actions related to heavy vehicles that contribute to reducing road trauma in Australia.

The NHVR considers the following road safety issues relating to heavy vehicles as the most important to address:

- Empowering industry and the supply chain to embrace a positive safety culture
- Encouraging and recognising operators that invest in improved safety practices
- Driving uptake in a modern and safer heavy vehicle fleet and breaking down barriers to the introduction of vehicle safety technologies
- Ensuring the regulatory framework supports the uptake of safer technology, such as Fatigue and Distraction Detection Technology
- Ensuring the road network design supports safe heavy vehicle use, including the provision of quality rest areas
- Improved understanding by other road users of how to interact around heavy vehicles

The NHVR considers the following to be the strengths of the draft Strategy:

- Acknowledgement that road safety is a shared responsibility and not just a road safety agency problem. It relies on action from all levels of government, road safety agencies and the community to improve road safety outcomes.
- Outlining the combination of levers available to effect change across road safety landscape. The draft Strategy is not just relying on hard solutions such as infrastructure to drive road safety improvements but also includes soft solutions such as awareness and education of all road users to share the road safely.
- Identification of enabling actions and highlighting the importance of nationally consistent crash data sets to inform and to measure the performance of road safety policy. The NHVR is encouraged by Federal funding of a national data hub that will lead to the collection, analysis and reporting of reliable crash data.

The NHVR supports the targets included in the NRSS. The NHVR is committed to contributing to these targets through programs of work that reduce the number and severity of crashes involving heavy vehicles.

The guiding principles adopted under the NRSS are appropriate and will help guide and support the activities under the three themes and nine priorities of the NRSS.

Additional Comments

The NHVR would like to provide additional comment in relation to priority areas that are closely related to the NHVR's priority areas for heavy vehicle safety:

Infrastructure

The NHVR supports linking infrastructure funding to measurable improvements in safety. With the growing road freight task in Australia, it is essential that the road network is fit-for-purpose now and into the future.

Consideration of heavy vehicle requirements when designing or upgrading the road network is integral to making the network safer for heavy vehicle and other road users. Infrastructure improvements such as increasing the number and

quality of rest stops along key road freight routes will enable drivers to stop when they are tired and may reduce the likelihood of a driver being involved in a fatigue-related crash.

Vehicle Safety Technology

The NHVR supports the priority to pursue technological improvements and uptake of safer vehicles, which is central to the NHVR's Vehicle Safety and Environmental Uptake Plan (SETUP). SETUP outlines a program of work to accelerate the introduction of new safety and environmental technologies into the Australian heavy vehicle market.

In particular, SETUP focuses on how to address the barriers such as mass and dimension limits to ensure the uptake of safer technologies without compromising freight productivity outcomes. In our recent response to the Commonwealth's *Draft Regulation Impact Statement for Heavy Vehicle Emission Standards for Cleaner Air* and the adoption of Euro VI, we highlighted the need to ensure there is collective agreement by the Commonwealth and states/territories to support amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law that would enable increased mass for operators that adopt Euro VI as a means to ensure its uptake.

A key area where we are heavily focused on driving the uptake of safety technology is in the fatigue space. There is widespread agreement that counting time is not an effective measure of managing fatigue, as fatigue is unique to individuals. One of the key tools in helping to manage individual driver fatigue is Fatigue and Distraction Detection Technology. In interviews with more than 80 heavy vehicle operators and drivers there was unanimous agreement that this technology is a gamechanger and can save lives by alerting drivers to incidents before they occur. We want to foster this life-saving technology, which is why we are launching a pilot of the technology to understand how it can be recognised in a regulatory framework. The pilot starts in May with a small and contained group of operators and we are hoping to expand the pilot to more operators in November.

We think this is the right approach to take with technology – a partnership model whereby the interested parties work together to understand the benefits for everyone. Industry has made a significant investment in technology solutions to meet individual business needs and as governments we need to leverage the systems already in place. Through the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, we are seeking for the legislation to remain neutral with respect to technology and to adopt a similar model we developed for Electronic Work Diaries – whereby the regulator sets the performance standards, not the type of technology, and the market meets the standard.

Changing high risk perception around safer and more productive vehicles

The safety and productivity benefits of Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles are well documented. PBS vehicles are involved in 46 per cent fewer crashes per kilometre than their conventional equivalent and deliver productivity improvements by 15 to 30 per cent. These vehicles also have a considerably younger median age of less than four years compared with more than 12 years for the national fleet.

Despite the clear safety and productivity benefits, there are still too many impediments to the use of PBS vehicles. Most notably is the fact the system still perceives PBS as 'high risk' and they are subject to a slow and cumbersome vehicle and access approval process. We know industry wants to invest in these vehicles – we expect to hit 12,000 PBS combinations very soon, a number initially projected to be reached by 2030. Governments have a collective responsibility to change the national and local policy settings around safer and more productive vehicles and encourage their increased adoption.

Cultural Change

The NHVR is of the view that the key driver to delivering improved long-term safety outcomes is through ensuring a positive safety culture. Safety is everyone's responsibility and in the heavy vehicle industry, it is important for all parties along the supply chain, both on-road and off-road, to better understand their legislative and operational responsibilities.

Greater industry adoption of safety management practices and awareness of their work health and safety obligations in relation to vehicles and road safety will help reduce work-related crashes, fatalities and injuries. A change in safety culture and improved understanding of chain of responsibility obligations by on and off-road parties will help create an environment in which unsafe road use by drivers will not be encouraged or incentivised to meet delivery deadlines.

Changes to culture will also greatly assist with mental health issues that are seen across the industry. The role of the whole supply chain in helping address these issues is starting to be recognised as a priority and is being pursued through organisations such as Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds.

Data

Nationally consistent crash datasets are a critical enabler to improving road safety outcomes. Federal funding of a national data hub will facilitate the collection of reliable crash datasets which can be used to identify the nature and extent of road safety issues and reliably predict the impact of countermeasures. Reliable crash datasets will help inform road safety policies and facilitate their evaluation.

Though the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, the NHVR is also seeking for explicit acknowledgement in the law of the NHVR as a law enforcement agency. This will enable improved sharing of heavy vehicle crash data between the police and the regulator in real time. This will enable the regulator to respond to incidents/identify trends and address them in a more effective and timely manner.

NHVR Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy 2021-2025

The NHVR is currently developing a Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy 2021-2025 (Safety Strategy). The Safety Strategy sets out, at a high level, the NHVR's ambitions in relation to improving heavy vehicle safety outcomes and contributing to the road safety targets set out in the NRSS.

The NHVR is setting an ambitious agenda to:

- Create positive change in individual behaviours and industry culture to improve safety
- Regulate a modern, safer heavy vehicle fleet that reduces the likelihood and impact of crashes
- Influence road network design to support safe heavy vehicle use.

The Safety Strategy is aligned to the NRSS. The NHVR is a partner in delivering the NRSS contributing to a reduction in road trauma in Australia.

The Safety Strategy will be supported by an Action Plan, produced annually, which will outline the activities that the NHVR will undertake over the five-year life of the Safety Strategy.