

NEWS RELEASE

FATIGUE, OVERTAKING TOP ISSUES FOR TRUCK DRIVERS: TWU/NRMA SURVEY

Monday 27 June 2011: Heavy vehicle drivers have raised motorists pulling out in front of them and driving tired as issues that concern them most when driving on NSW roads.

A first-of-its-kind, the joint Transport Workers Union (TWU)/NRMA BusinessWise survey of over 320 drivers found almost 40 per cent listed the dangerous practice of motorists pulling out in front of them suddenly as their biggest concern, followed by vehicles increasing their speed just as overtaking opportunities arise (29%) and drivers not obeying road rules (10%).

The TWU/NRMA BusinessWise survey found over two thirds of heavy vehicle drivers had driven despite being tired, with over 75 per cent describing NSW rest stops as inadequate and scarce.

The TWU represents tens of thousands of transport workers across New South Wales, while NRMA BusinessWise provides heavy vehicle breakdown and motoring support to 21,000 businesses.

The survey found almost 70 per cent of heavy vehicle drivers surveyed want more education for the community to work together towards sharing the roads.

More than 70 per cent believe the state's roads are inadequate for carrying heavy vehicles, with almost two-thirds (60%) calling on governments to commit to widening roads.

Transport Workers' Union of NSW Secretary Wayne Forno said, "Our members' pay, conditions and safety are our number one priority. Our members are professional drivers and motorists can be confident of their skill and experience when driving alongside them. The problem starts when fatigue sets in due to economic pressure from large Clients to keep driving past their limits.

"What concerns me about these survey results is that over two thirds of truck drivers are driving when tired and over one third of those say pressure to meet delivery deadlines is forcing them to do it.

"Overworking and falling asleep at your desk won't kill you: fall asleep behind the wheel of a fully loaded truck going down the freeway at 100km an hour and it's a different story. That is why we are fighting for Safe Rates which mean fair pay and conditions for Australian truck drivers, less tired truck drivers on the road and safer roads for all of us.

"As another important step in NSW towards combating fatigue and providing a safe workplace on the road for our members we welcome the introduction of more rest areas where they count, with facilities that meet the needs of our members."

NRMA President Wendy Machin said the joint TWU/NRMA BusinessWise survey gave a rare insight into the challenges faced by heavy vehicle drivers on our roads.

“Everyday heavy vehicles and motorists drive along the same roads which all too often are not up to the safety standards that prevent crashes from occurring,” Ms Machin said.

“The NRMA and TWU are both committed to the same cause – making sure our Members return safely to their families at night.

“To achieve this we must work towards improving the road network to cope with the volume of heavy vehicles and cars that drive on it, building more rest stop areas in key locations and providing more education to all motorists about sharing the road safely.

“The Government needs to invest more money into rest areas and listen to truck drivers when they say the facilities are inadequate and in short supply.”

The NRMA Businesswise & TWU survey of heavy vehicle drivers also found:

- 90 per cent believe congestion had affected their ability to deliver goods on time
- 85 per cent want more bypasses to divert heavy vehicles away from major towns
- 76 per cent believe freight has increased over the last 12 months
- 68 per cent would support real time traffic information screens set up across the state to provide more information on traffic congestion
- 64 per cent believe point-to-point speed cameras have not made NSW roads safer
- 35 per cent do not support point-to-point speed cameras for trucks on NSW roads
- 33 per cent wanted new rest areas built close to town centres and service stations
- Over the next four years 52 per cent of respondents want to see a motorway connection built between the F3 Freeway and the M2/M7 motorway; 35 per cent want to see the Pacific Highway made a priority.

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