

Workforce Challenges in Road Transport

Truck Driver Recruitment, Retention and Retirement Research Project

(Stage One)

For the Transport and Logistics Centre

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 General Observations

The road transport task faces a significant problem, interviews with Industry stakeholders relieved a current shortage of truck drivers in the Long Distance sector and in some rural and regional areas and a pending shortage in years to come across the entire industry if significant efforts aren't made now.

Demand is now outstripping supply of truck drivers. Current Truck drivers are older and work more hours than the 'typical' Australian worker. Yet, forecasts indicate that the demand for road transport services will increase at a pace faster than the growth in truck driver employment, exacerbating the current shortage of drivers in the Long Distance sector and in rural and regional settings.

Adding to this is an ageing truck driver workforce, which could potentially see the current truck driver workforce halved within twenty years, if significant numbers of new entrants to the industry are not found.

Research indicates there are significant barriers to attracting new drivers to the industry, as well as getting former drivers back to the industry.

This preliminary report provides a 'snapshot' of a current problem and a looming crisis for the road transport industry.

1.2 Key Observations

Quantitative Research

- According to the latest figures released by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) Road Transport has grown on average by 6.5 percent annually since 2000 with contribution to Gross Domestic Product reaching \$13 billion last financial year (in 2003-04 constant prices).
- This growth equates to an aggregate increase of over 26 percent growth in the road transport industry since the 2000-01 financial year¹.
- During this same period the aggregate growth in specific truck driver employment has risen by 16 percent, averaging 0.32 percent annually. In 2005/2006 employment experienced a decline.
- If the road transport industry is unable to recruit and retain truck drivers there is potential that in less than twenty years time the workforce will have halved.
- Over 50% of truck drivers work in excess of 41 hours a week, the average hours worked is 46.8 hours compared with 39.7 hours for all occupations. This means that truck drivers work on average an additional 369.2 hours per year compared with all occupations average².
- Whilst truck drivers earn a higher weekly salary compared with all occupations³, on an hourly rate truck drivers earn \$18.48 compared with \$21.23 for all occupations. Truck drivers weekly earnings are higher than all occupations because they work on average an extra 7 hours each week⁴.

¹ <http://www.btre.gov.au/docs/events/ATS2006.pdf>

² *ibid*

³ as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey

⁴ <http://www.btre.gov.au/docs/events/ATS2006.pdf>

- ABS statistics on average ordinary time earnings for full time non managerial male employees show truck driver earnings as having the fourth highest increase over 20 years (seasonally adjusted), being 275%.

Qualitative Research

- Whilst there was respect for truck drivers, focus group participants employed in jobs outside of the transport industry viewed work as a truck driver as hard with current driver conditions and work stresses as significant deterrents to entering the industry.
- For female focus group participants employed in the transport industry, to consider a job as a truck driver a number of industry changes would need to be made, including more flexible work hours, the opportunity to drive set route work, and exemption from heavy lifting.
- Truck driver focus group participants were attracted to the road transport industry because of the pay and the sense of freedom and autonomy.
- Truck drivers who had left the industry indicated that it would take a large increase in pay rates, combined with a strong commitment to occupational health and safety, along with safer vehicles, to see their return to truck driving.
- Truck drivers close to retirement age had limited retirement plans with most citing that retirement would be forced through a deterioration of health, rather than any planned decision.
- Each key stakeholder group (Union/Employer Association/Participating companies) held a different perception about the depth of the truck driver shortage.

1.3 Issues

- Research into truck driver employment levels shows that the road transport industry is faced with a critical shortfall in truck drivers within ten to twenty years, though qualitative research concludes that some states such as Western Australia and South Australia are currently experiencing a shortage.
- The growth in road transport and the decrease in truck driver employment infer that already truck drivers are working more efficiently and productively than previously. If forecasts in increased road transport industry output are realised, existing truck drivers and the small number of truck drivers entering the industry will have further increased workloads to meet the needs of customers⁵.
- Whilst Employer Associations and Unions acknowledge the immediacy of the truck driver shortage, companies appear less concerned in a practical sense demonstrable by their lack of long term strategies into recruitment and retention.
- When asked about what represents a typical 'truck driver', all focus group participants irrespective of working inside or outside of the road transport industry responded very similarly, that 'truck drivers' were line haul drivers with issues of hours and lifestyle being raised as negative aspects of the work.
- Through interviews with participating companies, the industry believes that growth will require additional drivers but that those employers with the capacity to resource initiatives on the issues of recruitment and retention are yet to do so. There appears no consistent leadership in the industry to grapple with the problems now and in the future.

⁵ This inference relies on the assumption that there is limited technological change available to make the transport task more efficient and that the use of alternative methods of transport (rail) will not increase at a rate large enough to meet the rate of demand for transport services.

- The Union believes that using existing training frameworks and funding to invest in new entrants to road transport is an immediate solution to recruitment. However they believe that funds are not being used to training new entrants, rather to retrain already licensed truck drivers.
 - At least one major employer has indicated their recruitment strategy of 'waiting till the death of the resource boom'. This is of concern as it does not address the inherent problem of recruiting for the long term, that being the need to recruit younger workers⁶.
 - Other major employers rely on their status as 'employer of choice' as a means of recruitment.
 - Anecdotally there appears more trucking licenses than trucks in operation, implying that there may be an existing 'skilled' base for targeted recruitment. However as qualitative research findings conclude recruiting back into the industry will be a challenge requiring strategy and resources.
 - The majority of employers do not keep systematic demographic information about their employee truck drivers. Rather human resources and operations managers are relying upon anecdotal evidence or projections of industry research as the basis for conclusions about forecasted shortages.
 - The majority of employers reject the recruitment strategy of introducing Temporary (457) Work Visas into the industry. This is not to imply that such options haven't been explored. However there is a perception presented by some employers that some types of transport work is not palatable to 'typical' truck drivers and could require imported labour to meet employer needs.
 - Several employers have indicated their belief that major clients are profiteering on recent oil price increases and have failed to pass on any customer surcharge to transport companies. This, they infer, makes it harder to increase truck driver conditions of employment and rates of pay.
-

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) received funding from the Transport and Logistics Centre (TALC) to conduct research into Truck Driver Recruitment, Retention and Retirement. In preparing this report the TWU has endeavoured to encompass the three key elements of the TALC business model:

- Attract, Recruit and Retain the best employees
- Educate, Train, Coach, Mentor, Develop Everyone at work
- Create, Sustain and Share Individual and Corporate Knowledge

This report has been produced to gauge the perceptions and directions of key industry stakeholders and potential entrants to the Road Transport Industry with particular reference to:

- Retention levels amongst the current truck driver workforce
- The issues and rationale of experienced truck drivers leaving industry
- The existing retirement plans of current drivers
- Current Road Transport Industry plans for new Driver recruitment and training
- The attitudes of young workers, not currently employed in the industry, about working in the Transport and Logistics industry as truck drivers
- The current & potential role of women working in the Road Transport Industry as truck drivers

The TWU sought and was granted funding from TALC to undertake the research and reporting component of the Project. The TWU engaged Globe Communications' specialist agency – Globe Workplace to conduct a series of focus groups, face to face interviews, and surveys in researching the Project.

2.2 Methodology

Focus groups

Globe Workplace conducted a total of four focus groups:

- One (1) potential entrants to the Road Transport Industry (males aged 18-30)
- One (1) potential entrants to the Road Transport Industry (males aged 30+)
- One (1) current truck driver workforce (males aged under 55)
- One (1) current industry workforce non truck drivers (females all ages)

Interviews

Two series of interviews were conducted with truck drivers. One with those who had left the transport industry for reasons other than retirement and a second, with current truck drivers over the age of 55.

A series of face to face interviews were held with key personnel from participating transport companies, including:

- Toll Holdings Pty Ltd
- Westgate Logistics Pty Ltd
- Linfox Pty Ltd
- Star Track Express Holdings Pty Ltd.

A number of representatives from key stakeholder groups were also interviewed to discuss their perceptions of the truck driver shortage in each state, to give insight into the issues facing smaller trucking companies and broader issues faced by truck drivers. Key stakeholder groups included:

- National office of the Transport Workers Union
- State Branches of the Transport Workers Union (QLD, WA, SA, VIC, NSW)
- New South Wales Road Transport Association
- Queensland Trucking Association
- Transport Forum WA
- Victorian Transport Association

Quantitative Research

Surveys were sent to participating companies and representatives from key stakeholder groups to gather basic quantitative research from each state. A copy of the surveys is attached in the appendix.

Additional research was undertaken to provide the report with observed industry figures on employment, growth and ageing. Footnotes and a bibliography have also been included.

3. Quantitative research findings

3.1 An ageing population

Australians are getting older. Fertility rates amongst women continue to decrease whilst improved health and lifestyle has meant increased life expectancy for men and women. And there are more Australians getting older than ever with the 'baby boomers' set to turn 65 between 2011 and 2030. With a large number of people set to retire in the coming decades there is the real possibility that Australia will face a shortage of labour in all sectors.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has forecast growth and changes in the population as outlined in the table below.

MAIN PROJECTION, Australia⁸

Assumptions		Projected population at 30 June			
Total fertility rate (b) Babies per woman	Net overseas migration (c) Persons per year	Life expectancy at birth (a)		2051 Million	2101 Million
		Males Years	Females Years		
1.7	110 000	84.9	88.0	28.2	30.6

(a) From 2050–51.

(b) From 2018.

(c) From 2007–08 in Series A and C. From 2004–05 in Series B.

Based on a fertility rate 1.7, medium life expectancy, medium levels of migration

Current ABS estimates population levels at 20.7 million.

The critical component for the Project of the ABS Population Projections is the forecasts of age composition of Australia's population. The ABS forecasts above project considerable change as a result of increased life expectancy coupled with a decreased fertility rate. By 2051 the proportion of people aged 65 and over will increase to between 26% to 28% up from 13% in 2004. The proportion of people aged under 15 years projected to decrease from 20% in 2004 to between 13% to 16% in 2051.

This means in 45 years time over 65 year olds will outnumber under 15 year olds.⁹ The implications of this changing demography on labour force supply to the market are already a major issue of governments.

This accelerating population ageing will have an immediate impact on the supply of workers to the labour market. According to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations it is predicted that the impact of population ageing will be equivalent to a shortfall of 195,000 workers, with New South Wales having the largest shortfall and South Australia most impacted in relative terms of population size¹⁰.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *2006 Year Book Australia*, Cat no. 1301.0, ABS, Canberra, pg 184

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Population Projections, Australia, 2004 to 2101*, Cat. no. 3222.0, viewed 15 October 2006 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/5A9C0859C5F50C30CA25718C0015182F?OpenDocument>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *Workforce Tomorrow, Adapting to a more diverse Australian Labour Market*, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra ACT, 2005, p. 3

3.2 An ageing transport industry

The trends and predictions of the ABS relate to the entire population, working or otherwise. Specifically the road transport population (truck drivers) is already confronting the issue of a changing composition, though the effects of an ageing population are only just being realised.

A number of key observations were made about truck drivers¹¹:

- The median age of truck driver is 43-this is 4 years above the national median age of the total workforce which is 39
- Over 45 percent of truck drivers are over 45- this is compared with 35.8 of the total workforce
- Only 4.6 percent of truck drivers are between the ages of 20-24

3.3 A statistically typical truck driver

A typical truck driver is **a 43 year old male**, working in a **full time position** and averaging **46.8 hours of work per week**. For his work he earns on average **\$865 per week**.

	Truck driver	All occupations
Average age	43 years	39 years
Average hours worked per week	46.8 hours	39.7 hours
Percentage full time	92.6 %	71.3 %
Weekly earnings per week	\$865	\$843
Percentage male	97.5 %	54.9 %

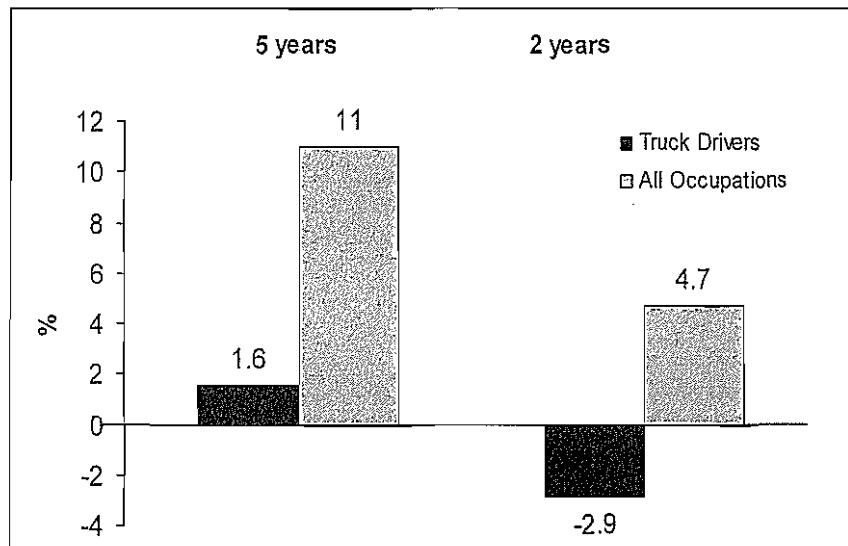
Source: <http://jobsearch.gov.au/joboutlook/default.aspx?pagelD=GraphInfo#keyindic>

This information was drawn from existing Federal Government statistics. The purpose of its collection was to draw a comparison with the data provided by participating companies. However, none of the participating companies were able to supply demographic information for such a comparison. This was because in most instances participating companies collect no systematic demographic information.

3.4 Transport Industry Employment Trends

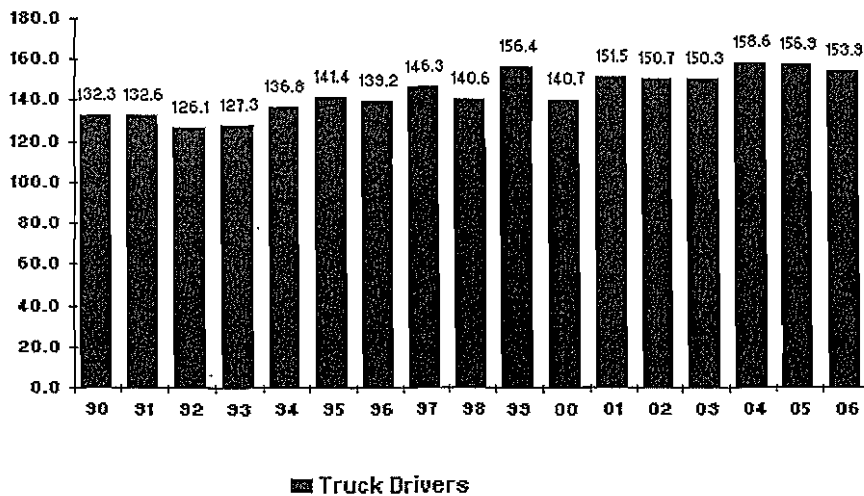
Whilst there is an apparent increase in the demand for transport services 'truck driver' employment has increased by 1.6% in the last five years compared with 11% in all occupations, a gap of 9.4%. In the last two years employment has decreased by 2.9% though the gap in growth compared with all industries has decreased to 7.6%.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics; 2006, Labour Force Survey, Australia - to February 2006. DEWR trend data



The graph shows employment growth (per cent) over the past five years and two years for truck drivers, compared with all occupations. Source: ABS Labour Force Survey, Australia - to February 2006. DEWR trend data.

The decrease in employment represents the loss of 4,700 jobs from the road transport industry in the two years from 2004. However total employment in the sector has increased by 2,800 in the five years from 2001. Future forecasts are for 'slight growth' in employment to 2010-11¹².



The graph shows the employment level ('000) for truck drivers for February, 1990 to 2006. Source: ABS Labour Force Survey, Australia - DEWR trend data.

¹² Source: <http://jobsearch.gov.au/joboutlook/default.aspx?pagelD=GraphInfo#keyindic>

4. Qualitative research findings

4.1 Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted for this study. The group respondents were a mix of ages and included truck drivers, female employees in clerical jobs in the transport industry, and workers from other industries. The focus groups were conducted in the Sydney CBD, and in Parramatta.

Focus Groups	Industry	Specification
1	Non-transport sector	Males 18-30 years
2	Non-transport sector	Males 30+ years
3	Transport sector	Females in clerical jobs
4	Transport sector	Male truck drivers under 55 years

4.1.1 Work values

Responses of women in transport

The focus group of female respondents comprised women in clerical roles in the transport industry, including customer service, personal assistants, sales managers and supervisors. Most respondents had been working in their current jobs for between two and ten years, although there were some who had been there under two years and one female had worked in the same company for 22 years in various jobs.

For many females in the industry, their jobs require long work hours, often from 7.30am to 6pm. Many are working desk jobs with teams. Some work alone and some jobs involve a combination of office work and depot duties. Almost all female respondents reportedly had daily contact with truck drivers and many said they had good working relationships with them. Many enjoyed daily social chats with their drivers.

A number of female respondents in this research loved their jobs. What many seemed to value most was the satisfaction of working with a great team of people, including office and depot staff as well as truck drivers. The strength of the team was considered to be of particular importance to many respondents.

"We go down to see the drivers each morning and say g'day. All of the girls have a good relationship with the drivers"
Female

"Because we have such as good relationship with them [truck drivers] we can plead with them and they agree"
Female

Those in customer service seemed to thrive on the activity and stress associated with their daily jobs. Their days were reportedly filled with tasks including locating missing freight, dealing with client issues, organising driver deliveries and pickups, and doing solving other people's problems.

Many of the females in this research started working in their current jobs because of a long line of family connections to the transport industry. Three respondents were married to truck drivers, others had parents in the transport industry.

Responses of current Truck Drivers

The male truck drivers in this research represented a range of experiences in the industry. Some had been driving for a few years, others had been in their jobs for 10 to 15 years. Two respondents had been truck drivers for 25 years. Most respondents had worked for two or three firms in their time as drivers. Interestingly, those who had been in the industry longer had not necessarily worked for more organisations than those who were less experienced.

Most truck drivers in this research worked on metropolitan runs, although some had done line haul work previously.

Few truck drivers in this research had come from families who worked in the transport industry. Many had come from related fields such as mechanics or other trades. Some had some from unrelated fields and become truck drivers because they were attracted to the salary. Some younger respondents had come to the industry from factory and retail jobs. Many of these respondents had regular dealings with truck drivers in their previous industries and were given job leads by word of mouth from these drivers.

For most respondents, it was the salary that attracted them to their jobs as truck drivers. One younger respondent wanted to earn a reasonable salary without having to study at TAFE or University. Interestingly, this respondent also admitted that he did not realise how hard he would have to work in his driving job to earn his good salary and it took him 18 months on the job before he was given "the good jobs".

Those who had only been driving for a short period of time were attracted to the jobs from other industries because of the money. One had come from a printing factory, another from retail, others from factory jobs. Interestingly, one respondent who had been working as a truck driver for 25 years is a qualified accountant who did not enjoy that line of work and was attracted to the idea of being out and about in a truck.

"If you don't want to go to University or TAFE, start driving and earn \$65,000 a year. But if you don't want to work for it, then go and work for Video Ezy or McDonalds"
Young truck driver

By far, what most truck drivers in this research valued most about their jobs was the money they earned. Although they reportedly work long hours, they get paid well for overtime, unlike many workers in other industries.

Working autonomously was also highly valued by most truck drivers in this research. Although driving to a schedule, which is often unreasonable, almost all respondents reportedly enjoyed being able to drive on their own without having a boss nearby. Drivers on single-drop deliveries reportedly experience a greater sense of autonomy than those who work on multi-drop jobs.

"When you do long trips away you kind of have the freedom. You are not being constantly nagged by your boss as opposed to multi-drop...."
Truck driver

"Single drop drivers have it easy"
Truck driver

For many truck drivers, their job satisfaction depends upon the organisation they work for as well as the type of jobs they are given. Conditions and jobs were reported to vary considerably between employers.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

Respondents in both non-transport industry focus groups represented a range of industries and jobs including hospitality (baristas and cocktail bar work), website design, retail, trades workers (metal industry, bike mechanics, building and electrical trades), engineers, finance and the airline industry. Those working in the building trades, particularly the older respondents, tended to have been in their jobs for the longest time.

For many respondents in other industries, their current jobs provide them with busy days, deadlines to meet, jobs to complete and customers to serve. Many described their jobs as particularly busy approaching Christmas. A number of respondents worked outdoors, others were fixed in confined spaces of coffee shops or retail stores. For some, travel was an important part of their job, including driving between clients. For one respondent international travel was the focus of his job as an airline flight attendant.

There were some respondents who worked alone and others worked in teams. Those in the building trades tended to work alone and spend time driving between jobs. Others, particularly those in retail and hospitality worked in teams and their work days were filled with interacting with colleagues and customers.

Almost all respondents over 30 years of age who worked in other industries were married with children. Only one respondent lived alone, worked in retail and considered himself to be not a sociable type.

Reasonable and flexible conditions. Reasonable work conditions was highly valued by many respondents. Some who worked in trades tended to value early finish times (although they were required to start early). A number of respondents did not begrudge working overtime if they were given time in lieu, to enable them to do other things. There was a feeling amongst respondents that work conditions can be more important than money.

Variety. A number of respondents with particularly interactive and mobile jobs enjoyed not being constrained to one workplace. These tended to be workers in the trades visiting clients' homes, both younger and older respondents.

Being busy. For many respondents in both the younger and older groups, they value a busy work day with deadlines to meet and things to do.

Social. Those who worked in retail or hospitality enjoyed the social interaction that was part of their jobs. This included serving customers, working in teams and meeting interesting people who came into the business.

4.1.2 Issues at Work

Responses of women in transport

There was considerably high job satisfaction amongst females working in the transport industry. A minor work issue that arose was the rising cost of petrol, which has resulted in delivery rates having to increase.

When prompted, a few respondents said they were somewhat concerned about their job security. For those who worked on computers, technological advancement has meant that part of their tasks have become easier and quicker, which may, in time, present some threat to their jobs. However, this did not seem to be a serious concern to any respondents.

Responses of current Truck Drivers

Truck drivers raised a number of work issues.

Working conditions. Working conditions for truck drivers were said to vary considerably between organisations. The relationship between radio operator and driver was said to be crucial in determining the happiness of the driver. Issues arise when radio operators do not have driver experience and therefore place unrealistic demands on drivers. Additionally, the time spent waiting for loads to be ready was considered to be another problem with the job.

"If you get a bad radio operator who doesn't think or care, he basically stuffs your day and he is your boss all day"
Truck driver

There was a widespread feeling that there are still significant pressures placed on drivers to complete deliveries, particularly line haul, in unreasonable time frames. 12-hour days was considered by most respondents to be a standard day for truck drivers. Respondents gave a number of examples in which their bosses, with little or no notice, instructed them to drive interstate. A number of these respondents had young families at the time. If drivers refused such jobs, this was said to potentially jeopardise their chance of being offered other jobs.

Pay structure. Drivers complained of the pay structure for long trips, which encouraged dangerous driving. Typically, line haul drivers were not paid by the hour, but rather, per job or by salary. This was thought to encourage dangerous driving, as drivers aimed to get the job done as soon as possible to get home. When being paid an hourly rate, however, drivers claimed to take more responsibility, and drive safely, knowing they will be paid for however long it takes them to finish the job.

"First Fleet had me on the road once for 17 hours straight. This was about five years ago".
Truck driver

"There are a lot of pressures in the industry and that is what a lot of people don't understand"
Truck driver

"If you are not being paid by the hour you just want to get home, but if you are being paid by the hour you drive sensibly"
Truck driver

Lack of career progression. A number of respondents felt that working as a truck driver meant there was little opportunity for career progression within the industry. There was said to be little opportunity for drivers to negotiate their jobs or their careers.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

The issues raised by respondents outside of the transport industry differed from that of current truck drivers. Issues focused on intangible and emotional aspects of employment versus the practical responses of current truck drivers.

Job insecurities. There was some feeling of job insecurity amongst some respondents. Some influences included company take-overs and the restructuring of the workplace.

Repetitiveness. Some respondents complained of the repetitive nature of their jobs. These tended to be people who worked in a fixed location.

Chaos. A few respondents felt that the fast pace of their work was too stressful, particularly in the Christmas period. These tended to be respondents working in the trades, as well as retail and hospitality.

4.1.3 Perceptions of truck drivers

Demographics

Responses of women in transport

From their experience in dealing with truck drivers on a regular basis, female respondents in the transport industry felt that they were most likely to be male, and aged between 45-55 years of age, particularly line haul drivers. Some metropolitan drivers tended to be younger, many local drivers were said to be under 30 years of age. Many of the younger drivers were said to be straight out of school and working in their first jobs.

Responses of current Truck Drivers

Truck drivers themselves concurred with the view that people in their line of work were most likely to be aged from about mid 40s to early 50s, with another cohort of younger drivers under 30 years of age, new to the industry with low skill levels. There were reportedly some men over 55 years of age still driving trucks.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

General perceptions

There was a range of positive and negative perceptions of truck drivers amongst both younger and older respondents who did not work in the transport industry. Their top-of-mind perception of a truck driver was someone who didn't see their family very much, worked long hours, was stressed, relied on drugs for stimulant if driving long distance, and was likely to be lonely.

However, on further probing and discussion, a number of subtle layers of perceptions emerged. For respondents under 30 years of age who worked in other industries, truck drivers were largely admired for the work they did and the conditions they endured. There was a general perception that truck drivers did hard, physical work, worked many long hours a day, started very early in the morning, had exceptional navigational abilities and were able to withstand considerable work pressure. Truck drivers were also considered to be strong and confident people.

"You'd have to have real confidence in your own ability to drive something of that size"

Male, under 30

"It's an artform being able to negotiate a vehicle like that"

Male, under 30

Younger respondents also perceived truck drivers as being trapped in their line of work, as their lack of other qualifications prevented them from making a career change. Therefore, the job was considered to be most suited for someone straight from school, or even before completing school, with no qualifications or experience in other fields.

Similarly, respondents over 30 years of age who did not work in the transport industry, tended to admire truck drivers for the jobs they did and the situations they endured. They perceived them as straightforward, no-nonsense types, and independent spirits. Their personalities were considered to relate closely to their work arrangement. That is, those who were on salaries tended to be laid back types, whereas those who worked for themselves or who were on a contract tended to be more highly strung, due to the ongoing pressure of completing jobs efficiently.

A few respondents in the younger group in particular had a perception of long distance drivers as aggressive and intimidating on the road, exhibiting driving behaviour to intimidate cars to allow them to speed past well over the speed limit. The reason for this type of behaviour was said to be the immense pressure the drivers are under to make unrealistic long distance deadlines.

There was a perception amongst respondents in both focus groups to recognise that the representation of truck drivers in the media was mostly negative and not always accurate. Many disputed the stereotype image that the media portrayed of truck drivers being overweight men who drank beer, wore singlets and lacked any refined personal qualities.

"They get a bad rap. Stubbie-type guys wearing singlets, barrelling down the highway, and agro. It couldn't be further from the truth"

Male over 30

Demographic profile of drivers

As would be expected, all respondents who worked in other industries felt that truck drivers were, by far, most likely to be male. There was also a feeling amongst respondents in the older group that drivers tend to be younger than they used to be. It was thought that about 10 to 20 years ago drivers would have been over 40 years of age, but these days they tended to be between 25 and 45 years of age. Some thought they would typically have a young family.

There was a general feeling amongst respondents in both groups that there are some female truck drivers around. Most felt that female drivers were more likely to be working in the family business and have either fathers or husbands as drivers, than to have chosen truck driving as a career. Although many thought there was no reason females could not drive trucks, some felt that the hard physical work required of lifting loads would make the job particularly difficult for them. However, a few respondents in the older group felt that truck drivers now have less responsibility unloading their trucks as forklifts are often made available at their point of delivery.

On the whole, most respondents from other industries thought that driving trucks would not be attractive to females, as it was a male-dominated industry with a lot of pressures and deadlines, and a lot of time away from home.

"It is not very feminine"

Male, over 30

Sources of information

A number of respondents in both of the non-industry groups work in trades or jobs that have some contact with truck drivers. Some make deliveries as part of their current jobs, others receive delivery

loads from trucks on a regular basis as part of their jobs. A few respondents in each of the two groups had worked as truck drivers for a brief period some years ago. Therefore, as might be expected, their impressions of truck drivers have largely been formed by personal experience rather than by stereotypes formed by the media.

"We get an Indian guy in who wears a turban. We get ladies coming in with their King Gee shorts and fluro vests, we get all different types"
Male, over 30

Socially

Responses of women in transport

The perceptions of respondents who worked within the transport industry were reasonably consistent with those who worked in other industries regarding the social life of a truck driver. A number of female respondents in this research who knew truck drivers personally were aware that their social lives were significantly limited because of their jobs.

Women who were married to truck drivers described a typical week in which their husbands were mostly absent, away on jobs, otherwise, intermittently gone overnight, or leaves home at 3am and does not return until 7pm.

"My husband leaves Monday morning. I don't see him till Friday lunch time or Saturday lunch time. If you have a young family....it would be awful"
Female in transport industry

Responses of current Truck Drivers

Truck drivers themselves seemed to enjoy their work, particularly the younger respondents who had just started out in the industry. There seemed to be a camaraderie within the work teams, with many stories of good social and working relationships between drivers and office staff. Additionally, some drivers enjoyed the brief social interactions they had with clients when goods were delivered, and the range of people they met and talked with on the road.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

There was an overall feeling that truck drivers would have to become accustomed to spending a lot of time alone. Truck driving was considered to be potentially lonely, particularly for drivers working on line haul jobs. There was mention that these drivers would need to become accustomed to sleeping in their trucks on the side of the road. Many felt that the social life of long distance drivers in particular would focus on barbecues with family and friends upon return from long distance trips.

Interestingly, respondents from the older group saw some social benefits in working as a truck driver, particularly for long haul workers. They acknowledged that long distance and interstate drivers would become known at regular pubs en route and would most likely develop a firm social relationship with people at a string of local pubs. Regular stops at local pubs was considered by some to be a crucial component of the social life of a long distance truck driver.

Emotionally

Responses of women in transport

Interestingly, female respondents who worked in the transport industry felt that line haul drivers tended to be happier people and more proud of their trucks. One even went on to say that she felt they dressed more smartly than metropolitan drivers.

"Saturday morning he gets home at 12.00 because he has been washing his truck"
Female, wife of truck driver.

Responses of current Truck Drivers

Although many experience job satisfaction, a number of truck drivers in this research described their jobs as frustrating and stressful due to the unreasonable pressure of deadlines.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

Respondents of all ages who worked in other industries felt that working as a truck driver would be a stressful job. For metropolitan drivers such as couriers, the frustrations of dealing with city traffic on a daily basis was thought to be a likely major contributor to stress.

"None of these guys look particularly happy"
Male, under 30

"I think it would be a very stressful job and very annoying as well, in the traffic"
Male, over 30

There were some subtle differences in perceptions of a typical emotional state of a truck driver between the two groups of respondents from other industries. Interestingly, a number of the younger respondents seemed to feel that the stress associated with metropolitan driving would be amplified for long distance jobs. However, some older respondents tended to think that long distance drivers in larger trucks would be more relaxed, as they would have less loading and unloading and more driving. One respondent over 30 felt that long distance driving would be harder emotionally due to the tiredness and endurance required for such long and irregular work hours.

"You'd be relaxed. You'd just get in your truck, sit there and drive"
Male, over 30

Additionally, some older respondents pointed out that with side-loading now available, the stress previously associated with dropping off goods would have been significantly reduced and drivers would now find it easier to get away.

In both the younger and older group, there were respondents who seemed to be aware that the stress associated with being a truck driver was largely dependent upon the individual contract of the driver. Interestingly, no respondents in either group mentioned depression or suicide being more prevalent in truck drivers than workers in other industries.

"My neighbour who worked as a truckie had a hard family life relationship-wise and it didn't work out. Some of it may have had to do with him being a truck driver. He drove long distances outside Sydney"
Male, over 30

Financially

Responses from industry employees

Consistent with the perceptions of respondents who worked in other industries, respondents from within the transport industry confirmed the financial benefits of working as a truck driver, but prefaced with the necessity to work many hours of overtime to receive good financial rewards. There was the perception that better rates of pay were available for drivers through companies that had high rates of Union membership, such as Toll and TNT.

One truck driver reported that typically a driver could earn \$65,000- \$70,000 per year by working 60 hours a week.

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

There seemed to be a reasonable level of knowledge amongst respondents of all ages that it was possible for truck drivers to earn reasonable money, but it depended upon their individual situation. However, there was a range of views regarding what was the most financially beneficial arrangement for truck drivers, that is, whether they were on a salaried position or worked for themselves.

Many respondents felt drivers who did better financially worked for themselves, as they could charge hourly rates to the transport companies for their deliveries. One respondent under 30 had previously driven a truck for a job and claimed to earn between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per week. Others said they knew of truck drivers who worked for themselves and earned up to \$1,500 per day.

Some respondents in the older group felt that a typical salary for a truck driver might be \$40,000-\$50,000 per year. Most respondents didn't think they could live on that, particularly those with families. They realised that by working overtime the salary could be increased, which raised the issue of quality of life. Some thought that interstate drivers would be better paid, but would have to work longer hours for a better salary.

"It must be a short term career. I can't imagine many guys making their life out of it. Over 40 hours a week, 54 grand and that is probably before tax"
Male, over 30

Perception of the Road Transport Industry

Responses of women in transport

Female respondents in this research described the transport industry as very demanding on employees, due to complicated rate structures for jobs, and the high demands the industry placed on employees to do their jobs. Many of these respondents felt that their experience in the industry related closely to the company they worked for. There was reportedly a high staff turnover rate in the industry, particularly for females in the customer service jobs, as many could not meet the demands placed on them.

Females who worked in the industry had high opinions of truck drivers, both professional and socially.
"They are generally a helpful bunch, truck drivers"
 Female respondent in industry

Responses of current Truck Drivers

There is a perception amongst respondents who worked within the industry that the transport industry has changed over recent years. The main changes to the industry were considered to be as follows:

- Increasing demands put on drivers to do their own paperwork, resulting in difficulties for illiterate individuals to find jobs as drivers;
- Sourcing drivers from overseas was considered to be on the rise, to be most cost-competitive and replace retired drivers;
- Road conditions are becoming safer, which means better driving conditions, less drink-driving and less fatalities. But it also means drivers encounter increasing number of fines and prohibitive driving conditions such as more schools zones. The time pressures placed on them have not adjusted to consider these changes;
- Drivers are expected to maintain their vehicles to a higher level of safety;
- Competition within the industry is considered to be increasing. Smaller yards were thought to be putting more pressure on drivers as a result of the amalgamation of the larger yards.

"There are not as many cowboys on the roads"
 Truck driver

Responses of workers outside of the road transport industry

Changes to the industry over time

Interestingly, respondents in both groups who worked in other industries had views on how the industry had changed over time. There were two main changes in recent that respondents felt were obvious to them; one was positive, the other a negative development.

- Side-loading of trucks had become available, making it easier for drivers and taking some of the stress out of their jobs;
- Industry changes, including company takeovers had resulted in renegotiation of their work conditions, stripping drivers of some of their previous benefits.

4.1.4 Current Truck Drivers: *retention and employment*

Truck drivers in this research felt that new drivers were attracted to the jobs because of the appeal of being able to work independently, being paid well, and having the freedom to drive out on the open road and see new places. One current driver spoke of new recruits he was aware of that had given up university degrees to become truck drivers because of these offerings.

Current truck drivers described a low retention rate of new recruits due to their misconceptions about the levels of responsibility and pressure that would be placed on them as drivers. Respondents reported a large number of drivers in their 30s on the road, but their skill level was said to be low, and they were thought to have been provided with little or no training to drive large trucks.

"The new ones think it is going to be easy"
 Truck Driver

"Every week there is a class of recruits that they bring into my yard and they are screened before they even make it. Within three months, one out of that 12 will survive. The rest are gone"
Truck driver

A number of truck drivers reported a high turnover rate within the industry as a direct result of the ways in which some companies treat their drivers. There were some research participants who were planning to leave the industry within the next five years. It was clear that their reasons for leaving the industry were a result of the pressures that had been placed on them as drivers. Interestingly, when probed, these respondents elaborated on their reasons for planning to leave the industry as follows;

Hours too long. One respondent who had been a driver for about 10 years, did not want to work the long hours on the road any more. He was going to be looking for a job that offered 9 to 5 work hours, such as a Trade Assistant. He considered that, unlike truck driving, such a job could open up other opportunities for other work down the track.

Underutilised skills. This respondent, a driver for 25 years, had been looking for a change for many years and considered many other things, including Amway. This truck driver was seeking an opportunity to enable him to use his retail or small business skills. He was keen to change industries and consider opening a Health Food Store, or to become self-employed in another industry.

SeaChange. Having driven for 10 years, this respondent had immediate plans to retire from the industry next month, move to Byron Bay to pursue his hobby as a photographer. He intended to financially support his hobby by working as an LPG mechanic, in which he has qualifications.

"I wouldn't go near the industry again unless they paid me a fortune"
Truck driver, soon to resign

Those drivers planning to remain in the industry were in positions of some flexibility, including being given opportunities to choose the types of jobs they do. Others reported to have supportive employers who make them feel valued as drivers. Some younger drivers felt that if things remain positive, they would stay in their current jobs until retirement.

There was a general perception amongst drivers that retirement age within the industry tended to be about 55 years of age. Some respondents felt that by that age, drivers experience compromised coordination and general body strain. Interestingly, others felt that older drivers who had more experience were often in positions in which they could pick and choose their jobs because of their reputation in the industry, and were often able to assert themselves to find jobs that did not put so much strain on the body.

"It puts a strain on you when you get older"
Truck Driver

"I can't see anything else to make that sort of money and I really love driving....and love bikes, cars, trucks and everything, so as long as it is not getting any worse...they are not going to push me....I am not going to break the law"
Young driver

"If it does not get worse I will probably retire there"
Young driver

4.1.5 Women in Road Transport : *potential role of women as truck drivers*

Those who worked in the industry acknowledged that female truck drivers were few. Some respondents knew of women who drove trucks, but they were perceived in the industry to be eccentric, tough, or not feminine.

Male truck drivers within this research seemed to feel, on the whole, that there was no reason females could not drive trucks as well as men. However, on further discussion some prejudices arose, including one respondent who felt that females would be limited in their ability to drive trucks because of their less developed spatial skills and map-reading abilities as well as their lesser mechanical knowledge.

Most female respondents in this research would not consider a job as a truck driver. Although they acknowledged a number of benefits of the job, on the whole, virtually all respondents felt that the negatives outweighed the positives. The following main disincentives were discussed:

- Long working hours of 10-12 hours a day;
- Hard physical work of unloading and loading;
- Time wasted sitting around waiting for loads;
- Heavy traffic, aggressive drivers and road accidents;
- Other external factors such as loads not being ready when they turn up, therefore missing other deadlines;
- Being given little notice about interstate travel;
- Being under unrealistic time pressures to make deliveries;

"I wouldn't do it in a pink fit."
Female in the industry

"I don't think it is a woman's job"
Female in the industry

"You have to be a certain type of person. A rebel. You have to want to buck the system".
Female in the industry

However, one or two respondents had contemplated driving a truck in the past, and would consider it again if the conditions were suitable. It is reasonably clear that female drivers would be more attracted to metropolitan multi-drop jobs in small vans in areas in which they are familiar. Those who were most likely to consider becoming a truck driver were those who enjoyed working alone, had an entrepreneurial spirit, and those who were younger.

"I would do courier work but I wouldn't do line haul"
Female in the industry

"I love driving anyway. It is the freedom. I'd love to get out in the open road. I think it would be great fun. And apart from the fact that people would go 'wow, she can do it'"
Female in the industry

"I think it would be awesome, going in and meeting customers, going hi, how you going. Part of it would be good, but sitting in traffic.....no"
Female in the industry

Females who worked within the industry were asked what would need to change in the industry for them to consider a job as a truck driver. From that discussion the following key industry changes were considered to be essential:

- Roadside toilet and café facilities would require upgrading;
- Flexible driving arrangement would need to be made available to enable women to fulfil family responsibilities;
- Females would need to be allocated good depots to assist with retention rates;
- On-the-job truck driving training would need to be provided;
- Females should not be expected to deal with heavy loads;
- Operations staff should be under more pressure to treat the drivers with respect;
- Females should be offered metropolitan runs in smaller vans initially;
- Areas of delivery should be able to be negotiated.

4.1.6 Workers outside of the Transport Industry : *potential as truck drivers*

There was considerable resistance from a number of respondents in both groups to the prospect of working as a truck driver. For many, the inflexible working conditions and long hours were significant disincentives, particularly to those who had a family. The idea was particularly unattractive to those who enjoyed social interaction in their current jobs. Many felt that their lack of interest in driving a truck was influenced by the facts that they did not have trucking in the family, and they did not have very much information about possibilities for jobs and conditions.

A few respondents in both the younger and older group had considered driving a truck in previous years, including a concrete truck, a line haul interstate delivery truck or a courier van. Their general perceptions about the pressures of the job had dissuaded them seriously pursuing it further at the time. For some, the idea of earning good money quickly was an attractive incentive to consider taking up a job as a truck driver for a short period of time. However, these respondents could not envisage being able to endure the working and driving conditions long term and would not expect to remain in the industry for long.

Many respondents, particularly those over 30, seemed open and willing to consider a job as a truck driver if they had more information. The prospect of the job was most attractive to respondents who worked in related trades, such as hardware, mechanics, or in jobs that require driving on a daily basis. The most likely prospective drivers also tended to be:

- in low-earning jobs, such as retail;
- without young children;
- attracted to a short stint of hard work for good pay;
- concerned about their current job security;
- people who like to work alone or are less sociable;
- interested in travelling to new places.

Respondents in the older group seemed to be more open to the idea of considering a job as a truck driver than those who were under 30 years of age. For the younger respondents, the negatives of the job far outweighed the benefits associated with driving a truck for a living, however for the older group there was more reluctance to admit this.

For both groups, there were some tangible changes that would need to be made to the industry and the offering for them to seriously consider a job as a truck driver;

Salary. The salary structure would have to be flexible for some. Some respondents preferred a salary rather than an hourly rate or a rate per job. However, the salary would have to be attractive enough so they did not feel they would need to do much overtime. Others would only consider working as a driver if they were on an individual contract with good hourly rates. One respondent over 30 years of age said he would consider a job if it paid \$28-\$30 an hour.

Although many were quite clear on the salary structure and arrangement they would be looking for, there was also an understanding that these changes were unlikely to be able to be implemented, as the large transport companies have already negotiated their contract rates, with little room for truck drivers to move to enter into any negotiations of pay.

"If they paid me big money I'd take it....and no stress"
Male, over 30

"Money-wise, I'd jump at it, as I am only earning \$32,000. I could even earn more by working less hours than I do now"
Male, over 30, Retail assistant

Working conditions. For some, an industry overhaul of conditions would be required for them to consider working as a truck driver. In particular, realistic time schedules need to be introduced, particularly for interstate line haul runs. Opportunities for negotiation would need to be considered, to enable drivers to fulfil other responsibilities, particularly family-related duties. There was a hope and expectation that conditions for truck drivers should be in line with those for professional workers in other industries. A number of respondents felt that the flexible conditions they required to work in the industry would not be at all likely to be achieved.

Better training. It would be crucial for new drivers to have opportunities to be adequately trained on the vehicles they were to drive in their jobs. Anecdotally, a number of respondents knew of truck drivers who were expected to drive large trucks as soon as they commenced work, with no training on the job.

"I've got a family at home, they are very young. I don't think I could ever do it. I'd be out on the road. I couldn't do it"
Male, over 30

I have never considered the job, but never say never...especially in the climate of AWAs.....who knows?
Male, over 30, International airline attendant

"I'm not a very social person at the best of times, so it would be good to spin off for a week, come back, catch up if I want, then spin off again"
Male, over 30, Retail assistant

"A lot would have to change. I don't know much about it"
Male, over 30

4.2 Interviews with truck drivers over 55

A series of interviews were conducted with truck drivers over the age of 55 based in greater Sydney to assess entry points into the industry, perceptions of change in the industry, and plans for retirement. A copy of the interview questions are attached in the appendix.

Drivers interviewed were employed as company truck drivers by participating companies in a variety of positions including:

- Line haul
- Local set run
- Intra state

All respondents were male with ages ranging from 55 to 67 years old. Respondents had varying experience though all had worked in road transport for over 10 years with several having worked as a truck driver for more than 30 years. Further variation was found in the length of service with their current employer from 18 months to 20 years plus.

Most respondents held a professional or trade qualification outside of the Road Transport industry awarded prior to commencing as a truck driver. Employment prior to entering the Road Transport industry included work as a:

- Butcher
- Finance Broker
- Retail manager
- Welder
- Naval officer
- 'Jack of all trades' in the building industry

4.2.1 Entry to the road transport industry

Respondents were asked to explain how and why they joined the Road Transport Industry as a truck driver.

Respondents generally felt that they had 'fallen into' transport but had discovered a like for driving. One respondent felt an urge to travel and viewed driving trucks as a means of seeing the country. Several respondents entered the transport industry through family or friends who had worked as truck drivers. These respondents generally had driven in trucks from a young age and given opportunities to practice driving over a period of years prior to obtaining a trucking license.

Other respondents entered the road transport industry initially as a means of supplementing weekly earnings. Generally these respondents had originally worked as warehouse workers and progressed into trucks because of the higher earnings available. After some time, usually a few years as casual drivers, these respondents then choose to become full time truck drivers and leave their previous professions.

When asked about why drivers enjoyed their jobs areas of job satisfaction included:

- The autonomy of driving- not having a 'boss breathing down your neck'
- Being outdoors and 'in the fresh air'
- The reliability of work on set runs

When asked about what were areas they disliked about being a truck driver, respondents cited:

- 'idiots' going down the highway, usually drivers not normally on the roads who drove during peak period
- Hours of work required to make a decent wage
- The low base salary
- The irregularity of hours

One respondent who was self employed prior to working as a truck driver found working as an employee dissatisfying. However he would not consider becoming an owner driver because of the 'cut throat' nature of road transport and changes to industrial relations laws which forced owner drivers to be 'at the mercy' of the principal contractor.

Several respondents stated they were satisfied with their work and that if they had any dissatisfaction they would not be working as truck drivers.

4.2.2 Changes over time

All respondents were asked about their perceptions about change in the road transport industry in the last ten years.

Increased regulation: The introduction of log books, points systems and driving plans. Respondents claimed that whilst the increased regulation may have increased safety on the roads in the long run, initially it caused many experienced drivers to lose their licenses. It was further claimed at the time when experienced drivers were losing their licenses, truck engine horsepower increased. New inexperienced drivers were driving more power trucks which, in the opinion of respondents, is the cause of major accidents in more recent years.

Increased demands on time: Client demand for next day delivery. One line haul driver respondent gave as example a truck pulled over due to a flat tyre. The respondent stated that years ago should this occur, at least three drivers would pull over to assist with the change. Now he says that because of the tight timeframes and demands placed on drivers not one driver would pull over to assist.

Improved equipment: Better trucks and unloading equipment. Several respondents believed the major change to working as a truck driver has been the improvement in trucks. The physical aspect of truck driving has been dramatically reduced and air conditioned trucks has made the task more comfortable.

Increased traffic: More cars and trucks on the road. Several respondents believed that the increased traffic in metropolitan Sydney had made the task of driving more challenging and frustrating.

More professional approach: One respondent perceiving the road transport industry to have improved its public appearance, with trucks and truck drivers more presentable.

There were conflicting perceptions about the change in management style over the last ten years. Some respondents felt that management had improved due to increased education levels. Others felt that, due to a lack of exposure to transport, managers increasing made decision that 'do not make sense'.

When asked about what had remained unchanged over the same period respondents stated:

- Poor hours of work
- Poor rates of pay

4.2.3 Retirement plans

All respondents were asked a series of questions about their retirement plans:

1. Whether they had a date or timeframe for intended retirement (semi or full)
2. What plans they had for retirement
3. Whether they would or had considered casual driving once retired

The majority of respondents did not have a timeframe or date of intended retirement with the exception of two drivers. Of those two drivers one was already beyond the retirement age of 65, with the other planning to retire before 65. The respondent over 65, whilst having a timeframe for retirement, was prepared to reassess his plans should his health maintain or deteriorate. The respondent under 65 planned to enter into semi retirement, preferably in a warehouse role, and at the time of full retirement planned to travel.

Those drivers who did not have a timeframe for retirement fell into two categories:

Retire when physically unable to drive trucks: Several respondents, both nearing and beyond the age of 65, whilst lacking a timeframe for retirement had made a decision about retirement, this being they would drive until they were physically unable to continue. For these respondents retirement would be a response to failing health rather than a clear and fixed date.

Several reasons were given for this approach to retirement. These include the idea that working is more appealing than retirement. One respondent stated that he couldn't stand the idea of driving a car, preferring driving a truck.

Yet to consider retirement: Several respondents were yet to consider retirement as they felt that they were not nearing an age where it was necessary. Unlike the previous group, they simply hadn't considered when or what would trigger retirement. These respondents were under the age of 65 but all did not feel that they would retire at that age.

All respondents were unaware of any form of retirement planning or assistance offered by their employer. There was a general agreement that this would be a good idea.

4.2.4 Conclusion

Generally drivers in this age bracket are happy with their employment, so much so that the majority of drivers prefer work to the idea of retirement. In the short term this means companies will not be faced with a mass exodus of drivers.

The issue of retention of drivers in this age bracket is of importance given that over fifty percent of the truck driver population is over the age of 45.

Whilst the intention of drivers to remain in road transport is good for the industry in the short term, there are several serious long term implications of the general idea of retirement through injury or failing health.

Research findings conclude that most drivers wish to work beyond the age of 65 and this presents an opportunity be taken into consideration in workforce planning in the industry.

However, the opportunity is cast within the parameters of an aged workforce – and the obligations and requirements of that workforce.

4.3 Interviews with former drivers

Eight former truck drivers were interviewed to assess their views on a range of attraction, retention issues.

The respondents were interviewed about:

- Length of service in the road transport industry
- Motivation to joining the road transport industry
- Advantages of being a driver
- Disadvantage of being a driver
- Reasons for leaving
- Current employment
- How they got their current job
- Happiness in new role
- Recruitment back into the industry
- Reasons for possible return
- What the industry can do to attract people back

4.3.1 Key findings

- One of the strongest attractions for many people to drive trucks was to be free and outside the workplace
- Most drivers who leave the industry will not return
- Issues such as vehicle safety, occupational health and safety, road safety and pay feature highly in the decision to leave
- Disruption to family life through long hours also figures prominently
- Even if these issues were addressed it is unlikely people would return to the industry
- To get people to return to the industry would take a huge boost in pay, combined with a strong commitment to occupational health and safety along with safety of the vehicles
- Pay rates are cited as a key area of concern, and it compounds other problems in the industry
- The industry is seen as both underpaid and unsafe. Consequently, other lower paid areas are seen as more attractive and hence the high turnover of younger drivers
- The perception of the industry being unsafe is dissuading young people from become long-term drivers
- Older drivers also talked about the decline in driving standards with more speeding and reckless drivers

4.3.2 Employment in road transport

Respondents ranged from a few months in the industry to 26 years. People worked in a variety of areas including:

- owner-drivers,
- cash in transit,
- long-haul
- delivery

Younger drivers tended to work for one company and older drivers – more than 10 years driving - had moved through four or five companies.

Entering the industry

People entered the truck driving industry for a variety of reasons. Some worked in related fields such as mechanics, while others simply found the job in the papers. One respondent just liked trucks and enjoyed driving them.

In most cases, it was the first available position to come along. Yet as soon as a suitable alternative presented itself, younger drivers left the organisation.

Number of transport companies

Respondents worked at between one and six companies.

Older respondents worked at the highest number of companies.

Younger drivers worked for one company before leaving the industry.

Getting a job in truck driving

Respondents were divided between word of mouth, and newspapers in obtaining jobs.

Others had family contacts who introduced them to people working in the industry.

On probing, most are aware of the internet, but had not considered using it to seek jobs.

Advantages of truck driving

One of the strongest attractions for many people in the workforce is to be free. Many former drivers liked the ability to move around and not be stuck in an office.

The trucking industry attracts many people who like to be free of bosses and just simply drive and look at the countryside as it passes.

Former drivers struggled to see other advantages in the industry, aside from one respondent who liked trucks.

Disadvantages of truck driving

A poor safety record came through as one of the strongest disadvantages of working in the industry.

Occupational health and safety was also seen as an important issue. Injuries often occurred when equipment was not used properly or when available equipment was not used at all.

There was a culture where it was seen as 'wimpy' to follow proper occupational health and safety guidelines. People lifted weights - even when proper equipment was available.

Hassling drivers by the police and RTA for minor offences was also seen as a key reason for leaving.

Some believed the main reason people leave the industry was because of management capacity to 'ride' people. After a while, people get tired of being pressured by management and simply leave. Older drivers talked about putting your head down, but younger drivers would simply leave.

The pressure resulted in long hours with reduced safety standards and an increased chance of marital breakdowns.

Added to the perception of low pay, the industry did not attract people for the long term.

People were also concerned about volume rates and job rates, which they argue led to speeding and unsafe road conditions for all drivers. Some argued that hourly rates encouraged safer driving.

In other areas, interference from the RTA, employers and unions chafed at the independent spirit of drivers and led many people to leave the industry - even owner-drivers.

4.3.3 Leaving the road transport industry

There were varied reasons for leaving the industry. Some left through job related injuries, while others left because of dissatisfaction with the sector as a whole.

The longer-term truck drivers tended to have highly specific reasons for leaving the industry such as health or injuries. Sometimes it was outside the organisation. One respondent left because of a change of career for his partner.

Younger people said they left because of complaints about the management of the organisation, long hours, low pay and unsafe working conditions.

Many were angered by the role of the RTA, particularly losing license points for offences - such as braking lights - when the company owned the truck.

Some drivers talked about general interference as a reason for leaving the industry - either from the RTA, union or management.

Overwhelmingly, the concern was about safety and drivers repeatedly stated that they did not feel safe. A workplace injury to themselves or to others caused them to rethink their position.

New roles

After leaving the trucking industry, some worked as tilers, gardeners, maintenance people, construction workers, and mechanics.

Most enjoyed their new role better than driving, aside from one respondent who disliked both roles.

Most preferred outdoor jobs, taking the element they liked in truck driving to a new role.

They got the new position through newspaper ads or through word of mouth.

Those who had left the industry had moved to similar paying jobs, but they now enjoyed the safety and reasonable hours of the new position.

Reason for leaving

Injuries

Three people interviewed had left because of actual injury. One had returned to other work but would not consider returning to driving. The other two who were injured were unable to work again in driving.

One interviewee fell from a truck in 1999 and has been on an invalid pension. He drove trucks for 26 years before being injured. He had no other reason to leave the industry.

A younger respondent injured his back while dragging bales of clothes. He had been working in the industry for six months.

In both these cases, injuries were preventable by strict adherence to OHS guidelines. One was a simple accident. The other driver felt that it was considered to be 'wimpy' not to do heavy work.

There appears to be a workplace culture of ignoring sound occupational health and safety guidelines – even if management has them in place. Both injured workers were happy in their jobs, but the injury forced them to leave the industry without any possibility of return.

Many respondents spoke about the lack of occupational health safety being indicative of an industry that takes safety for granted with employers ready to push people for more.

Other safety issues also included the state and road worthiness of trucks. Being compelled to drive unsafe trucks was another cause of friction.

Pay and conditions

Many respondents cited poor pay as one of the main reasons for leaving the trucking industry.

Yet those in new positions were not earning considerably more. However, they did feel safer.

Drivers were very concerned about long hours and the impact on family life. Many complained that it caused marital problems and that it had long term implications.

People suggested better use of shifts, such as breaking up long hauls into regular shifts.

Management

Tight or highly pressured management was also seen as a cause for people to leave the industry. As many people enjoyed the freedom of travel, the restrictions and pressure placed by company management were seen as onerous.

Management was also seen as trying to squeeze too much out of people.

Returning to employment

The decision to leave was a final one for most respondents.

The idea of returning to the industry was seen as a backward step. People said the industry would have to improve several areas for them to even consider returning. These included:

- Poor pay
- Dangerous work practices
- Management of drivers
- Safety of trucks
- Being forced to meet unrealistic timelines
- Police and RTA over diligence in booking drivers on minor charges
- Long hours leading to unbalanced personal lives

Most respondents would not consider returning to truck driving unless there was an improvement in wages. This would also have to be accompanied by an improvement in safety and a reduction in hours worked.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Attracting former truck drivers back to the industry is going to be a considerable challenge.

Most who have moved to different areas are enjoying their new jobs more than their truck driving roles.

Attracting people to driving does not appear to be a major challenge. People are prepared to try it in the first instance when no other work is available. However, they will also leave when circumstances change – such as a different position.

Younger drivers held driving positions for between six and eight months before leaving. None of the younger drivers interviewed would consider returning to it. Retaining these drivers should be a consideration in an overarching campaign.

The longer-term drivers left because of a change in their circumstances. Some would consider returning to driving in the right circumstances. They pointed to the need to stop speeding and reckless driving by younger drivers. They also talked about a change of culture of trying to get more out of people. This general trend was making the industry less attractive.

The most consistent message that came from all drivers was safety. Many people who had left the industry saw it as dangerous in different aspects. The danger took three forms:

- Poorly maintained trucks
- Unsafe work practices
- Dangerous driving conditions

4.4 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders interviewed included representatives from:

- Toll Holdings Pty Ltd (participating company)
- Westgate Logistics Pty Ltd (participating company)
- Linfox Pty Ltd (participating company)
- Star Track Express Holdings Pty Ltd (participating company)
- National office of the Transport Workers Union (Union)
- State Branches of the Transport Workers Union (Union)
- New South Wales Road Transport Association (Employer Group)
- Queensland Trucking Association (Employer Group)
- Transport Forum WA (Employer Group)
- Victorian Trucking Association (Employer Group)

Each representative was asked a series of questions which focused on clearly defining the issues and concerns directly affecting the Road Transport Industry and workers in their state. Further representatives were given a survey to confirm demographic research and to provide basic state by state analysis. A copy of the survey is attached in the appendix.

Under each sub heading are the perceptions of the 3 major contributors:

- Unions
- Employer associations
- Participating companies

Comments and observations are generalised to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. Terms like 'the majority' or 'most' have been used but should not be interpreted to mean all.

4.4.1 The current situation- *a difference in perception?*

Each representative was asked the question: is there a shortage of truck drivers? Responses were similar in that there was a general agreement that there was a shortage in the supply and availability of trained truck drivers. However there was a variance in the perceived depth and impact of the problem. Employer associations perceived a real and growing shortage in specific transport tasks which required immediate industry solution. Most participating companies acknowledge the shortage of truck drivers as an industry issue rather than an issue they necessarily had to or were prepared at this stage to formally address.

Unions response

The National Office of the Transport Workers Union and all of the Union's State Branches agreed that the Transport and Logistics Industry is experiencing a truck driver shortage and that the situation is getting worse each year. The TWU believes some of the major transport companies are simply relying on 'poaching' experienced drivers from other companies as a recruitment strategy. The TWU believes there are very few companies in the Industry currently investing in genuine training for existing staff or offering training and licensing for new employees wanting to become professional Drivers.

The TWU also believes that the high levels of casual employment in the Transport Industry and the misuse of Labour Hire Agency workers, has replaced genuine full time positions and led to increased job insecurity in the Industry.

"There is no strategic plan across industry to deal with recruitment, retention and retirement of Truck Drivers, there's only Labour Hire and job placement companies cashing in on the desperate situation of some truck Companies."

Employer association response

Employer association representatives around the country agreed that there was a shortage of truck drivers in their states. The issue of truck driver shortage is not new- many respondents believed that concerns were being raised at an industry level for at least five years. However the situation had not improved and now in some states trucks were being parked up due to the lack of experienced truck driver available to operate the vehicle. When asked about when the industry would hit crisis point, one stakeholder said things had already 'got ugly' since March 2006.

'SOME TRUCKS ARE BEING PARKED UP'

One respondent stated that a transport company operating a night shift would like to run 9 trucks. However the company is only able to run 2 trucks because of a lack of drivers.

Most representatives drew on anecdotal evidence and case studies as informing their opinions, from discussions with member companies to the sheer volume increase in job position advertising. Several associations had attempted to gather information from members about the depth of the problem. However, the lack of interest and support from members to such initiatives meant that little real data was available for associations to draw accurate conclusions about the problem.

Representatives believed the shortage was a national epidemic with state consequences. There were several key factors attributed to the national issue:

- poor recruitment strategies of all tiers of transport company
- an ageing truck driver population
- an apathetic industry
- undervaluing the importance of truck drivers by companies
- perceived barriers to recruiting young people
- wage competition with comparable industries

The latter factor is a very recent phenomenon and is based on the swell of drivers leaving road transport to work in the resources sector., However it was noted that some truck drivers left the industry to take up more 'lifestyle' friendly jobs which allow for more time at home, an example being driving taxis.

Participating companies response

All participating companies acknowledged that there was a lack of experienced truck drivers 'out there', believing that the industry was faced with a supply issue. However the shortage is yet to be felt by major employers. Whilst there was on occasion positions not filled immediately, to date each participating company was yet to be faced with permanently unfilled positions and having to park up trucks due to a lack of staff. These were viewed by some as localised or task based issues rather than an issue of national shortage.

There were several reasons given for the lack of available truck drivers to the 'industry':

- An ageing workforce meant the industry is fast losing its base
- Wages competition with the resource industry means truck drivers are leaving

- The general public's poor perceptions of the road transport industry and careers as a truck driver
- General perception amongst potential entrants that there is easier ways to make money
- The hours of work required to earn decent wages due to a low base rate- an industry built on overtime
- Changes in lifestyle expectations of the general public
- Lack of career progression meant drivers left

WAGES COMPETITION

One company representative stated that the company had recently 'lost' three drivers in NSW to the mines in WA, where these former drivers would earn \$80,000 for six months work.

4.4.2 Recruitment

Each of the respondents were asked about existing recruitment strategies within the companies and the industry as a whole. Further respondents were asked to list perceived barriers to recruitment. Responses differed from key stakeholder groups. The Unions highlighted a number of barriers which they perceived as addressable by the industry. Employer Associations were critical of the lack of recruitment strategy that focused on delivering new drivers who were capable of the trucking task. There was some variance in the approach of participating companies. Though none had in place a strategy, some had made some attempts to recruit new entrants to the industry whilst others continued to rely on their standing as employer of choice.

Unions response

The TWU believes the Industry needs to address the truck driver labour shortage by addressing the following three areas:

- Recruiting Australian workers particularly targeting former drivers, rural workers and young workers
- Utilise underemployment in the Australian economy by offering more permanent fulltime work to current part time and casual workers as well as considering part time arrangements for women and older drivers.
- Recruit, license & train new drivers on the job

The TWU is extremely concerned about the Australian Trucking Association and the Federal Government proposed solution to the skill shortage of truck drivers; being the import of overseas workers. The Australian Trucking Association acknowledges "*average weekly earnings for road freight transport employees are generally lower than for all occupations, providing less of an incentive to enter the industry*". The TWU believes they are at the forefront of a push to class transport as 'skilled' for the purpose of the migration program. The ATA has publicly argued that driving a truck is 'skilled' due to the rigorous licensing provisions that a driver needs to go through and that by using 457 Visas they aim to increase immigration to Australia to fill the transport industry's labour market.

Recruiting Australian Workers to the transport Industry

Utilising training to license new drivers

In 2006, according to National Council for Vocational Education Research (NVCR) figures, there were 10,680 people in training in 2006, completing the Certificate III in Transport and Distribution (Road Transport) which is the relevant two year Traineeship qualification for Heavy Vehicle drivers (figures include superseded TDT30297 and current TDT30202)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
16,080	17,440	14,730	11,580	10,680

Already there are approximately ten thousand road transport traineeships underway in 2007 (based on an extrapolation of NSW Jan figures). According to the NVCER, 46 percent of traineeships are 'New Entrant' traineeship. Apparently some 4,912 new entrants should be entering road transport (inclusive of bus and coach). The TWU is yet to find where these 4,912 exist.

The TWU believes that between 80 – 90% percent of all training that is conducted in road transport is actually of existing workers already qualified and licensed to drive heavy vehicles, this training is funded by Federal government as a traineeship irrespective of whether they are classified as "Existing Worker" or "New Entrant".

Whilst of value to existing workers, based on 2006 figures this 'retraining' has led to at least \$34 million per annum in wasted Federal Government training incentives¹³, none of which has gone towards training and licensing the next generation of truck driver. These Commonwealth subsidies are enough to train 8,712 brand new truck drivers. If only 50 percent of wasted funds were to go towards actual "New Entrant" traineeships, this equates to 4,356 new drivers each year.

Ex-drivers:

TWU NSW Branch research shows that there are 552,078 registered heavy vehicle licenses in NSW, and 438,243 registered trucks, indicating there are 113,000 drivers with valid licenses for large vehicles who do not drive professionally. This means that there are around 113,000 licensed drivers of heavy vehicles not working in the industry at the moment, which is around 30%, more drivers than trucks to drive. The TWU believes that an increase in the rates paid to drivers will result in a much safer industry could see many of these drivers return to work.

Rural Workers (outside Metropolitan and regional areas):

The TWU believes that employment in rural Australia is a major issue for two reasons; a general lack of jobs (high unemployment) is the first, and for those in employment most are receiving less remuneration than their city counterparts. TWU National office research has found that there is a widening disparity between employment levels in metropolitan areas and country, for example rural unemployment in NSW is currently at 8.4% whilst in Sydney it is at 4.6%. The TWU estimates that rural based truck drivers earn 28.1% or \$8549 per year less than metropolitan truck drivers.

The TWU believes that the transport industry could be a vital boost to many rural and regional centers around Australia. They could provide many of the areas' unemployed with valuable and meaningful jobs that could help boost local economies. As long as transport workers continue to be underpaid, the T & L industry will continue to be seen as the most dangerous industry in the country.

Youth Unemployment:

In January 2006 youth unemployment was at 16.3% and has been increasing gradually over the course of the year. This equates to roughly 136,800 workers between the ages of 16 – 19. Furthermore many of these unemployed young people are also found in rural areas.

¹³ TWU estimates that 1,000 of road transport traineeships are completed in the bus and coach industry. 90 percent of the remaining 9,680 is equal 8,712. The figure \$34.84 million is 8,712 multiplied by \$4,000 in incentives paid to companies.

The TWU believes the Transport & Logistics industry can provide valuable skilled employment for many of these unemployed youths. The TWU believes the Industry should be focusing on increasing rates and therefore safety levels to provide valuable jobs for young Australians first and foremost.

The TWU believes the Federal Government should be focusing on providing both in depth testing for ability and maturity as well as detailed and thorough truck driver training. This would reduce accident rates and make the road transport industry generally safer and it would also lower insurance premiums for companies who do choose to hire younger workers.

Underemployment in the Australian Economy:

TWU National office research showed in 2004 there were 9,724,000 people employed in Australia, 28% are part-time workers. Of the 28% of part time workers 22% want to work more hours, this means that 6% of the Australian labour force wants more work. The demand for more work is also higher amongst males with 29% of part-time male workers seeking more hours and only 20% of female workers.

Recruitment & Safety

Safety is an issue that needs to be addressed in retaining current drivers and attracting new employees into the industry. The NSW Branch of the TWU claims that over the last 18 months, 120 people have been killed in NSW in accidents involving heavy vehicles. This figure means that transport is one of the most dangerous industries in Australia. This constant danger takes its toll on those in the industry and pushes many experienced, hard working drivers out.

"There are no companies – small, medium or large that are investing in providing potential drivers the training or supporting the licensing costs for them to gain entry into the Industry"

Employer association response

Concurrent with the issue of an ageing truck driver population is the lack of coherent strategies to recruit young drivers into the industry. Previous entry points of 'falling or following into' the transport industry are no longer available to young people.

'NO CLEAR PATHWAYS TO ENTRY'

One representative observed that previous recruitment into transport came in the form of young people either following their fathers, brothers or uncles into transport or people who fall into as a last option. This is no longer the case but there has been no systematic system to replace it.

However instead of considering pathways through training representatives viewed the 'recruitment strategies' of major employers as one of procurement (poaching) drivers from smaller companies on the grounds of providing better conditions. This means that larger companies with the capacity to support training schemes are not entering into them. This also means that smaller companies are reluctant to up-skill their workers because of the potential of poaching.

A POLICY OF 'PROCUREMENT'

One representative was aware of major employers posting a notice in lunch rooms highlighting an incentive of \$1000 finding fee for current drivers to recruit experienced drivers from other companies.

Respondents also identified the issue of insurance and risk associated with hiring younger workers as a barrier to recruitment. The perception held by most representatives is that even those companies prepared to engage and invest in young people find it difficult to find insurance brokers prepared to

provide the necessary insurance. Some representatives were aware of companies who had insured truck drivers under 25 though such cases were rare and were driven by well informed companies.

There was some concern raised about pockets of new recruitment of workers, particularly drivers entering through Job networks programs. These entrants were considered by many as unsuitable and unskilled 'plastics' who required more support and training than was provided by either the company or the placement agency.

Participating companies response

Most participating companies use one or several recruitment companies to fill vacancies. The task of recruitment does not fall on companies themselves. However those companies who employ agencies believed that there was increasing strain on these companies to find suitable applicants. One company said that where previously one recruitment agency was needed to fill vacancies, now the services of five to six were required.

Further there was a consensus that 'soon' the recruitment issues faced by smaller companies would impact on major employers. This is because, as some respondents noted, the recruitment strategies currently engaged rely on the pool of experienced drivers from other companies. When those companies no longer are able to attract drivers, the major employers won't have a ready workforce.

A LACK OF STRATEGY

When asked to articulate the current recruitment strategy each company engaged, representatives stated that there wasn't a long term systematic approach to recruitment of either new drivers or of new entrants to the industry.

Traditional methods of recruitment being advertising and the use of recruitment agencies were still the dominant process engaged by companies. However some alternative methods of recruitment have started to emerge such as advertisements on the rear of trucks. Other companies had created their own recruitment agencies to fill short term vacancies to lessen the reliance on outside agencies.

One company had made several attempts to recruit directly from employees working in a warehousing capacity. The program offered would see a store person 'buddied' with an existing driver and licensing paid for by the company. The commitment required by the employee was time. Of the three attempts made there was a zero take up.

One respondent company had commenced a pilot program across two states aimed at new entrant recruitment. Applicants with a C Class license receive training through an outside driver training company in order to obtain their MR license. The program has been in place for six months and data on success rates are currently unavailable.

Despite these attempts at alternatives, there was an agreement that there was a lack of long term strategy within companies. However several companies were in the 'conceptual' stage of long term recruitment programs.

4.4.3 Retention

Each of the respondents were asked a series of questions about the issue of truck driver retention, existing retention strategies, their success to date and whether such strategies would be continued. The Unions highlighted key areas of improvement in the employment conditions of truck drivers as the most effective means of retention. So too the Employer Associations who, whilst unable to pinpoint

existing strategies amongst their membership, believed that improving conditions would address some of the issues of wages competition with other industries. Only one company had in place a strategy, though there was a number of suggested changes companies could adopt to address retention.

Unions response

According to the Transport Workers Union, the best way to keep experienced drivers in the Transport Industry is by improving workplace morale, having fair wages & conditions, providing job security and by ensuring safe driving hours & safe workplaces.

State Branches of the TWU listed the following issues for Truck Drivers as issues of retention:

- Job Security
- Workchoices Legislation
- OH&S standards
- Conditions of the roads / City Traffic
- Hours of Work
- Wages
- Unsafe driving Hours
- Security of Entitlements

Employer association response

Employer association representatives questioned the preparedness of the industry to deal with the existing and growing shortage. Most respondents were not aware of any retention strategies engaged by employers to overcome the leakage of drivers to other industries. This was because they believed that companies still had not accepted the competitive wages market in which they were forced to compete. Whilst other comparable industries paid better wages road transport would continue to lose current drivers and fail to attract new drivers.

ISSUES OF RETENTION ARE ISSUES OF CONDITIONS

Several respondents said that the reasons drivers stay in the industry are linked to rates of pay, level of training, quality of equipment and general morale amongst staff. Those at the 'better end' of the market retain staff.

Respondents believed that there were several key reasons that truck drivers stayed in their companies for extended periods of time:

- Good working conditions inclusive of hours and rates of pay
- Staff morale
- Training and investment in human capital

Several respondents believed that whilst the responsibility ultimately of retention fell to employers, at times the negotiation power and demands of clients made it difficult for employers to provide the conditions of employment necessary to retain truck drivers in a competitive market.

Participating companies response

Most companies do not engage a formal retention strategy to stop the flow of drivers leaving the industry. However most acknowledge that the current shortage affecting the industry is in some part due to the number of truck drivers leaving the industry for reasons other than medical or retirement. Companies believed that the reasons for losing drivers are the same reasons for the problems with recruitment. Additionally it was acknowledged by at least one company that there was no longer an option of career progression available to drivers, nothing to aim for.

NOTHING TO OFFER

One respondent stated that because of the need to keep truck drivers driving, the company was no longer able to offer career progression into operational roles.

Those companies that did engage a retention strategy focused programs on lifestyle improvements. Programs included:

- Aiming for a maximum 9.5 daily hours of work
- Access to health professionals including physiotherapists
- Providing fresh fruit to drivers
- Promoting healthy living through a lifestyle newsletter

Companies with retention programs which included a reduction in hours found that after a transition period, they experienced an improved retention rate. The transitional period included drivers leaving who desired to work more overtime than the maximum aim. The benefits of this approach to retention were seen in a healthier workforce, explained by one respondent as a result of the type of driver attracted to lesser hours, generally someone with family responsibilities less inclined to drink and smoke.

THE HEALTHY BENEFITS

One respondent stated that the company's retention program was aimed at improving the lifestyle of drivers with the added bonus of an increased retention rate.

Those companies without a retention program also do not utilise any form of exit surveying. This means that information about exactly why truck drivers are leaving is not being kept and thus is unable to inform any form of future retention strategy.

However those who did note that besides retirement and injury the primary reasons for leaving were lifestyle change required a change in industry, the desire to earn more money and leaving the industry to 'improve'. The final reason was perceived to be in response to societal views of truck drivers as lacking skills and education.

4.4.4 Retirement

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the ageing truck driver population, particularly with reference to retirement assistance provided by the industry through companies. The Union's survey of membership is dire in its predictions of demographic change than those of the ABS. Employer Associations acknowledged the position road transport will be in within the next ten years. Participating companies however were unable to give accurate measurement of their own 'problem' as all did not hold the information of truck driver age centrally. Further none of the participating companies had in place retirement plans for either the company or the drivers.

Unions response

The TWU NSW Branch conducts an annual survey of its membership, below are the results of tracking age demographics over the past three years. It should be noted that between 70-80% of the TWU's membership are Truck Drivers (numbers vary across each state branch).

Age	2004	2005	2006
Under 34	12%	15%	3%
35-44	21%	26%	28%
45-54	33%	32%	32%
55-64	21%	25%	28%
65+	13%	2%	10%

There has been a 7% shift in TWU Member's age moving into the over 55 age bracket within a 3 year time frame, at the same time there has been a 12% drop in members under 35 in a one year period.

Despite drivers over 60 wanting to continue to drive they aren't always able to continue to drive due to injury, at the same time young people are not being given a start in the industry.

Employer association response

Respondents identified a major contributing factor to the current shortage as the ageing demographic of the current workforce. All employer associations acknowledge that the majority of current drivers are likely to retire within the next ten to twenty years. However respondents were unable to identify any members who had in place retirement plans to assist those drivers nearing retirement.

There is a concern that most drivers will not work until retirement due to the physical demands of driving. This implies that the projections of twenty years to retirement for over 45 year olds could be incorrect, that the situation will become dire much earlier.

'HOW LONG CAN DRIVERS KEEP ON THE ROAD?'

One stakeholder asked the question 'Who will run line haul when all the Vietnam Vets retire? We have no group coming through to replace the guys who are about to retire. We have to change the way we think about line haul if we are to fill the needs'

Participating companies response

Respondents from participating companies acknowledged the changing and ageing demographic in their truck driver ranks. However the majority of companies were unable to provide a demographic profile of their truck driver workforce. These companies acknowledged that this lack of information was concerning as it limited their ability to forecast retirement and plan for replacement requirements. One respondent with the information available calculated the average age of company truck drivers to be at 38. Another respondent stated that based on information two years old, company drivers were on average 48 years old.

It was generally held that most drivers burn out rather than opt out of the industry should they wish to up to and beyond retirement. One respondent believed that in most cases drivers did not continue to work up into retirement due to injury.

None of the participating companies had in place a retirement program available to drivers.

4.4.5 Existing strategies

Key stakeholder representatives were asked to outline existing strategies in place to address truck driver recruitment, retention and retirement issues. The Union highlighted concerns about the lack of investment into new recruits through training. Employer Associations highlight the lack of coherent strategy from the industry to address the issue and outlined their individual attempts. Respondents from participating companies outlined the approaches as listed in previous sections.

Unions response

The TWU believes that Employers are not investing in training new 'recruits', truck drivers, and of those Companies that claim to train employees, they are mispending Government funds to subsidise employment costs rather than genuinely train or license employees.

The TWU National Office claims Trucking Employers, annually benefit from approximately \$40m in Commonwealth Government subsidies to train a mixture of 'Existing Worker' and 'New Entrant Trainees (New Apprentices)' in the Certificate III in Transport and Distribution (Road Transport) (at a ratio of approximately 60% Existing Worker / 40% New Entrant). This amounts to \$4,000 per driver.

The TWU National Office also claims that Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) receive an extra (approximately) \$2,500-\$5,000 from State Governments (varies from State to State) if the Trainee is a new entrant to that company. The TWU believes that companies' total money for new entrants (\$6,500-\$9,000) is more than enough to:

- Train a car driver to drive an MR (Medium Ridged – small trucks) / HR (Heavy Ridged large trucks), Upgrade to a HC (Heavy Combination, Semi-trailers),
- Learn about OH&S (Bluecard),
- Learn about navigation, customer service, maintenance, basic computer and office skills.
- The money is sufficient to cover wages as well, if the driver is unproductive for a few days as they get their various licenses

The TWU believes that even though some companies (Westbus, ACTION Buses, State Transit and Star Track) do use their subsidies and RTO payments correctly and train brand new drivers, the current levels of funding **are sufficient to train an extra 3,500 drivers each year**. The TWU claims much of the money that is allocated for New Entrants is inserted into the companies' general revenue and not used to train new drivers.

"For existing workers, companies tend to split the \$4,000 grant from the Commonwealth with their RTO to pay for general expenses and keep the rest. Rarely is this money used to upgrade existing drivers or train workers such as dockhands to become drivers."

Employer association response

As stated earlier employer associations believe that the industry has in place limited strategies on truck driver recruitment, retention and retirement. To circumvent this perceived hole Employer associations have engaged a number of strategies to address the labour shortage faced by the road transport industry including involvement in training programs and engaging members directly on the issue of shortage.

Training

Several employer associations were directly involved in school based initiatives which sought to engage students through traineeships. Respondents viewed the programs as a method of creating pathways into the industry, to capture the 18-25 years who were seen as an insurance risk. Further training initiatives included involvement in the provision of training in Certificate I, II, III and IV in Road Transport. However several respondents saw the industry's use of training as a means of income.

Respondents highlighted the following as barriers to existing training strategies as:

The provision of training is costly and resource intensive: some associations had previous or were currently running registered training organisations focusing on schools based traineeships. However all respondents concluded that this was unsustainable because of the costs associated with running programs and the limited financial support.

The links with industry are limited: Though there was much success in terms of student interest in traineeship programs engaging industry was challenging in terms of placement and financial assistance.

Not enough existing training focuses on new entrant training: It was acknowledged by several associations that some companies have used government funding and incentives to train truck drivers, most companies were using it as a form of revenue, providing limited upskilling of the current drivers rather than encouraging and training new entrants.

Engaging

Across the country there was a consensus that employer associations had for at least the last five years had sought bring the issue of shortage to members. Such efforts included presentations at forums, engaging members on the necessity of training new entrants and supporting those vanguard companies with recruitment and training initiatives.

Participating companies response

The major strategy employed by participating companies was one of 'Employer of Choice'. The common belief amongst respondents major employers could continue to pay above award rates, they believed they would be able to attract drivers from other companies. Other companies had tried internal recruitment programs with zero take up.

AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

One respondent said that because of TWU agreements, the company would continue to be an employer of choice and at this stage did not have a direct driver shortage issue.

As noted earlier a number of companies are engaging retention strategies aimed at improving the lifestyle of drivers. This program had proved successful after a transition period and respondents indicated the intention to maintain these programs.

4.4.6 Future strategies

Respondents were asked to outline what each believed needed to be implemented to address the barriers to recruitment and retention of truck drivers and strategies to stem the effects of the labour shortage. There was great variance in response.

Unions response

The TWU listed the following 10 strategies as a means to address the Truck Driver Labour Shortage across Australia:

1. The rates paid to drivers – either employees or contractors – must be immediately increased to make our roads safer and our industry more stable. This will act as an incentive to attract both drivers who have left the industry back to it, as well as to new drivers considering entering the industry.
2. The Federal and State Governments should immediately consider a publicity campaign to attract younger drivers to the industry.
3. The Federal and State Governments should act immediately to amend Traineeship (New Apprenticeship) regulations to ensure Certificates in Road Transport are linked to heavy vehicle licensing.
4. Safety needs to be immediately improved within the industry. The constant sight of truck drivers being killed and injured on our roads acts as a massive deterrent to anyone considering entering the industry.
5. A greater effort needs to be made by trucking companies to increase the level of permanency within their companies through moving casual workers who are seeking full time employment into a permanent role or setting enforceable casual and permanent ratios.
6. The Industry should reject the Federal Governments intention to extend 457 Visa to Truck Drivers, allowing the importing of foreign Drivers. There is already a problem of overseas workers who consistently fail in complying with our safety laws which urgently needs addressing.
7. Industry coordinated Transport apprenticeships for school leavers and targeted recruitment campaigns to attract young workers from other customer based industries into Transport
8. Establish centralised systems of recruitment (i.e. a jobs portal)
9. Better training in the industry for current workers (better access to training assistance for companies and potential drivers)
10. Portability of Conditions & occurred entitlements such as Long Service Leave across companies

"It is only through the combined efforts of Government, industry, peak industry bodies and transport companies that a comprehensive solution can be found."

When asked which of the following initiatives would the TWU support in overcoming the Truck Driver shortage, each of the following statements were supported;

- Transport apprenticeships for school leavers
- Targeted recruitment campaigns (to the industry)
- Centralised systems of recruitment (i.e. a jobs portal)
- Better training in the industry (better access to training assistance for companies and potential drivers)

Employer association response

A number of suggestions were given as to how the road transport industry should address the issue of recruitment and retention. These included:

Changing the perception of the shortage: Several respondents indicated a need to change the direction of dialogue surrounding the truck driver shortage. Respondents felt that the issue of shortage was not limited to transport and thus drawing attention to the issue meant competing with all industries faced with similar issues. Rather it was believed that the consequences of a lack of action should be highlighted and be at the forefront of future strategies.

A 'SUPPLY CHAIN BLOCK'

One respondent stated that should the industry and government fail to address the shortage in truck drivers there would be a supply chain block which would have a major impact on exporters and retailers.

Changing the task: One respondent believed that there needed to be a change in the way companies organised the task of driving. This was in particular reference to line haul where the respondent believed companies should consider creating changeover depots to allow drivers to return home more regularly. The respondent believed that changing attitudes to lifestyle required companies to creating more family or lifestyle orientated logistics plans.

Letting the market decide: One respondent believed that it was not the role of associations or other bodies to intervene in recruitment issues and that the market would decide on issues of supply and demand of labour. This was not the position of most respondents who placed little faith in the industry's ability to address current issues and future barriers.

Industry buy-in: There were several suggested means of how 'industry' could become a more active participant in addressing the driver shortage:

- leader companies supported by associations to implement training and recruitment strategies
- providing career pathways to address the perception of transport as an industry of last resort
- engaging in government initiatives about training and recruitment
- financing initiatives about training and recruitment

It was the view of several respondents that, when compared to other industries like construction, the road transport industry had not contributed, financially or otherwise to the problem it in some parts had created.

Improving conditions: One respondent believed that in order to attract and retain workers in road transport, there need an improvement in conditions of employment, the example give as portable long service leave.

Issues of 457 visas: Whilst there was no unanimous support for the concept there was some discussion about the use of working visas to 'relieve pressure' in sectors and tasks where there was long term shortage. It was also raised the possibility of having Department of Immigrations and Indigenous Affairs take a leadership role in including drivers as an employment type sought for permanent immigration.

The role of Associations: Several respondents believed that the role of associations in the new environment created by the shortage was to provide connections between key stakeholders, particularly in relation to the provision of school based traineeship initiatives.

Participating companies response

Respondents from each of the participating companies foresee growth in the business over the next 12 months. Most of the respondents believed that this would require an increase in the number of drivers to meet the increased demand. In order to recruit and retain respondents outlined the following:

Changing perceptions: respondents believed that the road transport industry needs an image overhaul. Community perceptions of the nature, status and physicality of driving roles needed to be changes.

REMOVING THE BLUE SINGLET

One respondent stated that the industry needed to work collectively to 'wipe out the blue singlet' image and replace it with the reality.

Increasing rates of pay (reducing hours): one respondent believed that addressing the issues of retention and recruitment into the road transport industry centred on an industry wide increase in wage rates which also included a reduction in hours. It was believed that this would reduce wages competition and address lifestyle barriers.

Concepts in pathways: Some companies are exploring the possibility of entry level placements to continue through to trained truck driver. But it is worth noting that at the stage of this report these strategies are concepts and are yet to be applied.

457 visas: Most companies stated that any use of 457 visas would be a last resort. However some companies had explored the option of importing truck drivers but had concluded that in the current environment this was not a cost effective means of recruitment. To date none of the participating companies were introducing an overseas worker recruitment strategy.

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6. Appendix

Participating companies questionnaire

Name
Company
Has the demand for company services grown over the last five/ten years? What is pushing the increase?
Does the company forecast similar trends in growth in the next five/ ten years? Why?
How does the company/ how will the company meet these needs?
How many drivers resign annually from the company?
How many drivers are recruited annually?
What methods does the company employ to recruit the required number of truck drivers? Why did the company use this method? How well did it work?
Why: Success: If labour hire used: Are you happy with this process (is it best practice?) What does the use of labour hire mean to long term retention?
What was the average cost per recruited truck driver?
Does the company have a minimum standard of experience required to successfully be employed?
Does the company require job applicants to take any form of testing (medical, police background, comprehension) prior to commencement?
Does the company provide training (inclusive of licensing) for suitable applicants without the necessary experience or qualifications? If yes: who provides the training? What is the cost per trained truck driver?
Of the truck drivers recruited in 2005 how many went through training (inclusive of licensing) to gain the necessary qualifications?
Does the company have a recruitment strategy? What about specific strategies recruiting: People under 30: Women:
Did the company meet its recruitment needs in 2005? If not- why?
Is there a shortage of truck drivers in the road transport industry? Evidence?

How is the company addressing the shortage? Policy/ strategy? (457)
What are specific issues for specific states?
What are the barriers to recruitment? How is the company addressing these barriers?
Which of the following initiatives would the company support in overcoming this supply issue: <input type="checkbox"/> Transport apprenticeships for school leavers <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted recruitment campaigns (to the industry) <input type="checkbox"/> Centralised systems of recruitment (i.e. a jobs portal) <input type="checkbox"/> Better training in the industry (better access to training assistance for companies and potential drivers)
Does the company employ a retention strategy focused on current company truck drivers? If yes- what is the strategy, explaining:
How the need for a strategy was identified:
Any targets/ specific aims set:
How the strategy works (who/when/where):
Successes to date:
Length of time in operation:
Does the company offer in-house training? If so why and what type? Does this lead to upgrading of licenses?
Does the company offer training to truck drivers for the purposes of either professional development or skills increase? If so why and what type?
What percentage of the company's truck driver employees participate in some level of professional development or skills increase training (all types) annually?
Does the company survey employees (particularly truck drivers) about training matters or professional development?
What paths are more likely taken by truck drivers in relation to career progression? Why do you think this is and what does the company do to foster this approach to career progression?
Of those who would be classified as having a managerial position- what percentage are ex truck drivers? What is the 'typical' path of a truck driver wishing to progress into a managerial type position?
What is the average age of company truck drivers?
What is the average age of retiring truck drivers?
What percentage of company truck drivers are over 55 years old?

What percentage of company truck drivers are under 30 years old?
How many drivers retire from the company annually (average over the last ten years)?
How many drivers under 30 years old join the company annually (average over the last ten years)?
Does the company offer incentives to truck drivers to stay beyond the retirement age?
Does the company exit survey retiring truck drivers?
Do the responses to these surveys indicate a desire to continue driving or stay in the industry? If so, in what capacity?
Does the company require truck drivers to complete an exist survey on resignation?
If yes: What are the three main reasons given for resignation?
What does the industry need to do to address the shortage in truck drivers?

Employer Group questionnaire

1. Is there a shortage of truck drivers in your state?
2. Is this a national epidemic?
3. Do you have any figures that highlight the shortage for your state?
4. Research?
5. Policy/ strategy?
6. Can we have a copy?
7. Is there a forecast of when it will reach crisis point?
8. Why is there a shortage in your state? Is it not enough drivers or too much work?
9. Is there anything unique about the situation in your state?
10. Is there a specific sector/ employer type which is more affected than most?
11. What has been the strategy of your first tier members (major employers in the state) to the recruitment of NEW entrants?
12. What has been the strategy of your second tier members to recruitment of NEW entrants?
13. What is the industry doing to retain drivers?
14. What is the industry doing to entice drivers back?
15. Is there scope for greater industry wide cooperation on recruitment strategies?
16. What trainee schemes exist in your state?
17. In your opinion have these schemes assisted with increasing the number of NEW entrants to the industry?
18. Are you aware of any targeted recruitment campaigns to attract young people to the industry?
19. Are you aware of any targeted recruitment campaigns to attract women to the industry?
20. In your opinion why don't young people and women join the industry?
21. Is there room/ a need for governments to get involved in driver recruitment?
22. What would that involvement be?

Union questionnaire

Name
TWU Branch
Position
Phone
Mobile
Email
1. How many TWU members in your branch are employed as truck drivers?
2. What is the breakdown of this membership: LOD's Company employees Employees of contractors
3. How many TWU truck driver members are over 55?
4. How many TWU truck driver members are under 30?
5. How many TWU truck driver members are women?
6. How does these figures (over 55, under 30 and women) compare with 10 years ago?
7. How does these figures (over 55, under 30 and women) compare with 20 years ago?
8. How many truck drivers each year resign from the TWU because they are leaving or have left the industry?
9. What are the three major concerns of TWU truck driver members in your state?
10. How important/ how unimportant is training to TWU truck driver members?
11. Does any TWU agreement/ award covering truck drivers include training clauses? If so could you please supply a copy?
12. Does any TWU agreement/ award covering truck drivers include clauses covering trainee positions? If so could you please supply?
13. It is claimed that the Transport Industry, like other trades, is faced with a shortage of trained truck drivers- what is the TWU's position on this?
14. In the TWU's opinion how is the industry dealing with the apparent shortage?
15. What does the TWU think the industry needs to do to overcome this apparent shortage?

16. Which of the following initiatives would the TWU support in overcoming this apparent shortage:

- Transport apprenticeships for school leavers
- Targeted recruitment campaigns (to the industry)
- Centralised systems of recruitment (i.e. a jobs portal)
- Better training in the industry (better access to training assistance for companies and potential drivers)

Focus Group- current Truck Drivers

1. How did you come to join the transport industry- how did you get a start as a truck driver? What made you decide to be a truck driver?
2. Would you describe yourselves as typical truck drivers? What is a typical truck driver?
3. Describe a typical day at work. Is this the same for most drivers?
4. What are the benefits to being a truck driver? What keeps you in the industry?
5.
 - a. What are the disadvantages of being a truck driver?
 - b. How can these barriers be overcome?
6. Have any of you got plans to leave the industry in the next five years? Why?
7. If you were to leave your current employer, how would you go about getting another transport job? How do people get jobs as a truck driver? (steps/ means)
8. How many people under 30 years old drive trucks in your yard? And where are their skills levels at? Do you think young people are reluctant to join the transport industry and work as truck drivers? Why is that?
9. How many women truck drivers in your yard? Why do you think there are so few women truck drivers?
10. What do you think the industry needs to do to attract young people and women into driving trucks?

Focus Group- workers outside of the industry

1. What's going on in your workplace? (quiet, on the go)
2. What do you like about your current job?
3. What is your ideal job?
4. Describe to me a typical truck driver.
5. Describe to me what you think a typical day for a truck driver would be.
6. What do you think it means (financially, socially, emotionally) to work as a truck driver?
7. Where have you formed the basis of this opinion? Do you know any truck drivers?
8. Have you ever thought about a working as a truck driver? Why/ why not?
9. Would you consider a job as a truck driver? Why/why not?
10. What do you think the benefits are of working as a truck driver?
11. What do you think the disadvantages are of working as a truck driver?
12. Which outweighs the other: benefits or disadvantages?
13. What would have to change in the industry for you to take up a career as a truck driver? (What would make you consider a career as a truck driver?)
14. What do you think the industry needs to do to attract people?

INFORMATION CARD

15. With this information would you consider a career as a truck driver?
16. Hypothetically if you were to consider a career in the transport industry how would you go about becoming a truck driver?

Focus group- Women in the industry

1. What things do you like about your jobs?
2. What would be your ideal job?
3. How much contact do you have with truck drivers in your workplace? What is the nature of this contact (chat, work related)?
4. What is a typical truck driver- if you had to described a truck driver to someone who had never met one what would you say? (Explore financial/ social/ emotional)
5. What is a typical day for a truck driver? (From waking up to finishing for the day).
6. What do you think the benefits are of working as a truck driver? What do you think the disadvantages are of working as a truck driver? Which has more weight?
7. Have you ever considered working as a truck driver? Why/ why not?
8. What would have to change in the industry for you to take up a career as a truck driver? (What would make you consider a career as a truck driver?)
9. So if they: (List of the changes outlined above) would you take up a career as a truck driver?
10. We've talked about the changes that need to be made to make you consider a career as a truck driver. What about women with no exposure to the transport industry? How would you go about recruiting a woman to a career as a truck driver?

Interview questions- truck drivers over 55 years old

1. Age:
2. Length of service with current company
3. Length of service as a truck driver:
4. How did you become a truck driver?
5. Why did you become a truck driver?
6. What do you like about being a truck driver?
7. What do you dislike about being a truck driver?
8. What are the major changes to road transport you have observed in the last ten years?
9. What changes do you predict will be seen in road transport in the next ten years?
10. When do you plan to retire?
11. What are your plans? (semi retirement/ moving/ traveling)

Interview questions- former truck drivers

1. For how long were you a truck driver?
2. What made you become a truck driver?
3. During that time how many transport companies did you work for?
4. How did you go about getting a job as a truck driver?
5. What were the advantages to being a truck driver?
6. What were the disadvantages to being a truck driver?
7. How long ago did you leave the industry?
8. What were your reasons for leaving?
9. What are you currently employed as?
10. How did you go about getting the job?
11. Are you happier in your current employment? Why/why not?
12. One of the issues we are exploring is recruitment back into the transport industry. What would it take to get you back into the industry?
13. If you were to return back to transport- how would you go about it?
14. What do you think the industry needs to do to attract people into or back into driving trucks?