



**Australian Trucking Association
Submission to:**

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into skills
recognition, upgrading and licensing**

Australian Trucking Association

The Australian Trucking Association (ATA) is the national body representing the Australian trucking industry. First established in 1989 as the Road Transport Forum (RTF), the ATA provides public policy advocacy for trucking operations within Australia through research, lobbying, education and communication. The ATA's policy coverage embraces safety, taxes and charges, infrastructure, career development, environmental and technical issues.

The most important part of the ATA is the network created by its membership. The ATA brings together the broader industry to focus on issues of national significance.

Members of the ATA comprise a variety of organisations, including state and sector based trucking associations, as well as many of the largest transport enterprises in Australia and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). ATA members cover all sectors of the trucking industry - from the owner driver to the national transport operator.

The Association's membership also includes a number of allied trades - those companies providing goods and services to the trucking industry.

ATA Training Alliance

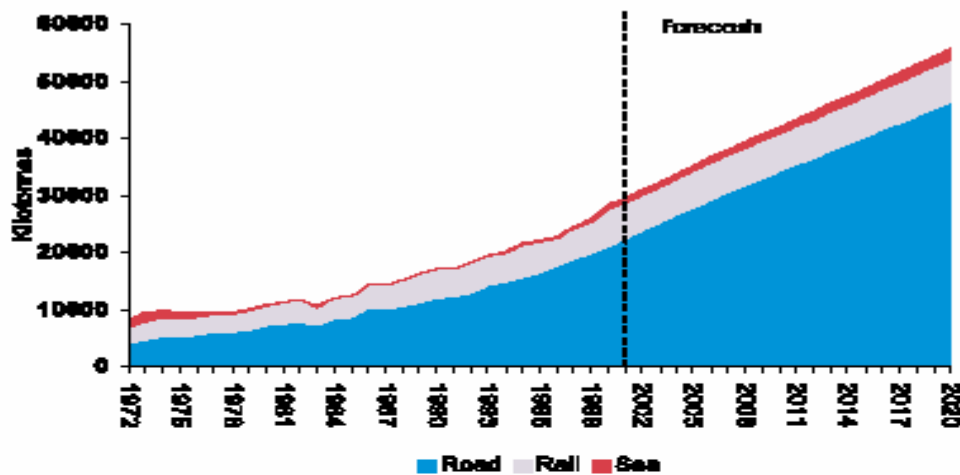
The ATA Training Alliance combines the “not for profit” industry training organisations that are developing and delivering training programs and career opportunities for the trucking industry. The ATA Training Alliance is a council of the ATA, and is responsible for developing the ATA's recruitment, careers and training policies.

The aims & objectives of the Training Alliance are to deliver the recommendations of the NISI Report, called “Driving Australia's Future: A Report and Action Plan Addressing the Skills Needs of the Road Freight Transport Industry.” The ATA participated in an industry working group which produced the report with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Technology.

Background

Road transport is vitally important for the continued growth, prosperity and well-being of the Australian nation. Because of its immense size and dispersed population and production centres, Australia is the most road transport dependent country in the OECD with some 810,000 km of roads. Also, the forecast growth of freight will lead to its doubling by 2020, with road's share of non-bulk freight forecast to treble by that date.

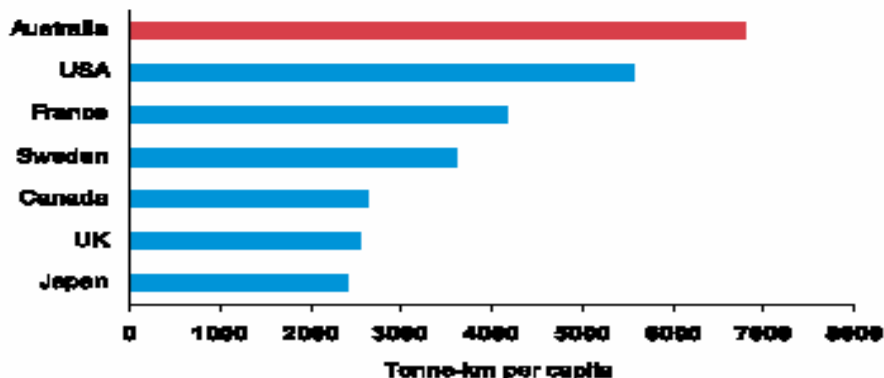
Figure 2 Non-bulk freight transported by mode 1972-2001 and projections to 2020



Data source: BTRE (2003b)

Australians rely on trucks more than most other economies because they suit our geography and population density.

Figure 3 Road freight tonne-km per capita (2000)



Data source: Austroads (2003).

Skills Shortages in the Trucking Industry

The NISI report highlights the skills shortage in the trucking industry. Since the report was published in 2003, anecdotal evidence indicates that the industry's skills shortage is worsening, especially for drivers and diesel mechanics.

The report's objectives are:

1. Improve employment outcomes, particularly the recruitment and retention of skilled employees.
2. Enhance the image and profile of the road freight industry to promote greater awareness of its important role and ensure that it is seen to offer attractive job opportunities and career paths.
3. Develop and support a credible and effective training culture within the industry to encourage the skilling of employees, strengthen employment outcomes, enhance regulatory compliance and meet broader legal requirements.
4. Review and improve existing training structures to promote easier access to the industry and provide better skilling of employees and trainees.

Truck drivers

Truck drivers earn their eligibility to drive by obtaining a hierarchy of licences as shown here-

Licence	Time Requirements
Light Rigid (LR)	Must have held a class C Licence (includes car) for at least one year.
Medium Rigid (MR)	Must have held a class C Licence for at least one year.
Heavy Rigid (HR)	Must have held a class C Licence for at least two years or LR or MR Licence for at least one year.
Heavy Combination (HC) = Single Semi Trailer	Must have held a MR or HR Licence for at least one year.
Multi Combination (MC) = B-doubles/road trains	Must have held a HR or HC licence for at least one year.

This hierarchy incorporates the learning and skills requirements testing for truck driving rather than through formal qualifications. It should be emphasized that TAFE or equivalent courses are also available in the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) in road transport, ranging from AQF 1 to 4. We understand that the uptake among new entrants is increasing and is being actively encouraged.

Unlike other occupations, a truck driver is given the responsibility for capital equipment that has a value in excess of \$250,000 let alone the value of the freight. The technological advances in vehicle design and operation has increased the level of skill required to operate the heavy vehicle. Heavy vehicle operation is far more than just driving a vehicle from point to point. The skills required range from vehicle operation, mechanical comprehension of hydraulics, pneumatics, fuel systems, engine cooling, power train operation and maintenance.

However, it is the lack of mandatory formal tertiary qualifications that handicap the entry of truck drivers as skilled personnel through migration schemes. This is because truck drivers are classified as level 7 in the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO). In 2006, the ATA understands that this classification will be continued in the new Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANSCO).

ASCO Level 7 is not generally recognized as sufficiently skilled to gain entry through migration of skilled workers where labour shortages exist. This is despite the demonstrable skill requirement of truck drivers through a rigorous licencing system, training requirement encompassing vehicle operation, load restraint and fatigue management.

Thus truck drivers are not considered for immigration, either on a permanent or temporary basis, when shortages of skilled workers in Australia are being addressed

The only exception is with the use of Regional Labour Agreements. The ATA acknowledges with thanks the support of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in current discussions to implement a Pilot Regional Labour Agreement for 100 truck drivers and/or diesel mechanics.

Of course, a Regional Labour Agreement has a restricted use, and can only play a small part in addressing the shortage of truck drivers.

Diesel mechanics, by virtue of the vocational education required for qualification are classified under ASCO Level 4. This qualification has an opportunity to be classified as a skilled category for migration purposes.

Recommendation:

The ATA, and the ATA Training Alliance, submit that the considerable skills and associated requirements for drivers of heavy trucks should be recognised as an appropriate skill for migration purposes when skills shortages are considered.

3 August 2005