

29 OCT 2003

ROD HANNIFEY

Road Transport and Road Safety Advocate

Australian Trucking Assoc. National Professional Driver of the Year 2001
Columnist for Owner Driver and Caravan World Magazines.

Submission to the House of Representatives, National Enquiry into Road Safety.

I am a full time employed truckdriver who is involved in a number of road safety initiatives and I would like to raise four points that I believe are not currently given sufficient attention and which I believe will reduce the road toll.

1. **Driver Education.** Australian Transport Safety Bureau figures continue to show that fatalities between cars and trucks are 80% the fault of the car driver and yet we do not teach new drivers about sharing the road with more and larger trucks. This information is also not widely promoted and the public only hears "Truck kills 2 people" etc every time there is an accident involving a truck. I have attached a copy of my "Truckies Top Ten Tips for Sharing the Road". This came from surveys amongst truckdrivers asking what motorists needed to be taught to better share the road with trucks. Unfortunately many drivers learn by "accident", some dying and others getting injured and then there is another "Truck kills" headline.

I believe that this information should be provided as part of learner driver education and should also form a small part of the questions. It also needs wider promotion to other drivers who similarly have not been educated about Sharing the Road with Trucks. Long term, a video as part of the licensing process would provide a better understanding and be more likely to see the information as relevant and be remembered, when a new driver comes across a situation with a truck on the road. One video could be used in all states lessening the costs.

2. **Roads.** Whilst many roads have improved, many are still well below standard for the volume of traffic and the size of trucks, with many roads still with no shoulder, leaving soft edges and or deep ruts. Also little consideration is given to how road surface irregularities affect trucks. There are many savage dips and bumps that have no justification for being there, other than no one but truckies feel and are affected by them. This not only increases wear and tear on the road, the truck and the drivers fatigue, for every action there is a reaction and this reaction is what is doing more damage to roads and bridges.

If trucks could travel smoothly along a road or onto a bridge instead of bumping and thumping and at times landing on bridges due to rough abutments, the trucks, truckies and roads and bridges would all be better off and road safety must also improve. These bumps and dips can be smoothed or filled in whilst repair crews are in the area, rather than crews going out to do just this work, thereby keeping costs down and this will improve safety, not only for truckies, but for all road users and must lessen road damage.

There is also the issue of roadworks and road repairs creating ridges or edges and these can have a similar effect in causing road damage. There needs to be better matching of road repairs to the original surface and these repairs will last longer. I know of a number of roads where there are more patches than original road. Whilst this can be caused by a number of factors, bad patching, leaving bumps and dips, must contribute. I have also attached a proposal for a national 1800 number, for reporting of potholes etc, which I believe could save road repair costs and lives through early notification of damage to roads.

3. Truck Rest Areas. With increasing focus on fatigue as a major risk in the road transport industry (but also for motorists) there is not the effort, awareness of truckies needs and understanding of how important facilities are, for truckies to be able to manage fatigue. The physical areas needed, lack of shade or even thought, for daytime rest where shade is critical, lack of toilets and even tables and chairs in many areas, so that a driver can get out and have a snack, let alone the ability to park and do shopping or buy food, at other than a truckstop, are all factors which are making it more difficult to comply with far too inflexible laws, made by those who have no understanding of life on the road.

Currently much money has been spent on car rest areas which have "No Trucks" signs and these facilities are all empty at night while there aren't enough spots for trucks. Also at night car drivers are more likely to park with trucks for security. In eleven years and well over 2 million kilometres, I would have seen less than ten cars parked in car rest areas at night, yet I have seen too many accidents and spoken to truckdrivers who have had to travel on when tired, to find a place to pull up and sleep. There needs to be urgent attention given to this. An immediate start can be made by just clearing suitable areas on the roadside, which can then be upgraded as funds are available. We do not expect millions to be spent tomorrow, but a start must be made. The Pacific Highway is urgently in need of more truck rest areas. I would be happy to provide a plan for my ideal rest area. The RTA is building one from my design at Taree.

There is currently a trial on the Newell Highway, between Parkes and Gilgandra, of marking informal truck rest areas (just a piece of dirt, often with shade, but not a recognised rest area) with Blue Reflectors on roadside guide posts. This has proved very simple and effective and if expanded has the capacity to save lives in showing with some notice, a spot for a tired truckie to pull into, if a recognised rest area is full or too far away. This is an interim measure that can be done at very little cost until sufficient truck rest areas are provided and can still fill gaps in some areas. I have attached an explanation

page and have a number of pages of truckies signatures supportive of the idea.

4. **Caravans.** There has recently been talk of licensing drivers of four wheel drives, yet a driver can currently drive a small four cylinder sedan for ten years and tomorrow, go out and buy a two tonne four wheel drive and two tonne of caravan and take to the roads with no training whatsoever. I have attached a copy of my Caravan Survey which I have been distributing for sometime, but I would like to see a video showing safe loading, operating and advice, along with sharing the road with trucks information provided, as I don't think licensing will happen. From statistics I obtained from the RTA, over 75% of accidents of vehicles with trailers were "lost control" and this confirms the need for improvement in education of these drivers.

I would be happy to assist in any further way possible and with some planning and approval from the company I work for, would be happy to arrange for members of the enquiry to come for a ride in a b-double. I have been doing yearly "Highway Truck Audit Trips" for five years now and have had people from four state road authorities and press, radio and TV travel with me as part of these trips. Thank you for this opportunity and I hope these issues can be addressed. These items will not only improve truckdrivers safety, if actioned they will improve safety for all road users. Safe Travelling, Rod Hannifey.

National 1800 Number for Road Repairs Proposal.

This proposal is born of previous attempts to notify road authorities of road hazards and the frustration of getting to the right person, without spending ten minutes on a mobile call while being transferred from one person to another, only to be told you have phoned the wrong office or area. It aims to alleviate this by having a central location which can take calls and relay the information on to the correct authority and with a message bank at night, see authorities notified quickly the following morning of potholes and the like before they become large holes. This then promotes immediate reporting, rather than either ringing hours later during office hours, when details are left out or location is not as certain, or not bothering to report at all.

Truckdrivers often find potholes or road hazards first, due to being on the road at all hours and may often travel a road on a regular basis and then notice changes. Road authorities can benefit from being notified before little holes become big ones, keeping repair costs down and possibly saving an accident. All motorists, caravanners and motorcyclists could also contribute to the service and in having a single phone contact number the service would be easily accessed and promoted through press and media.

The costs of setting up would be once only, with state maps showing responsible offices or depots and ongoing costs would be far less than savings realised in road repairs and accidents prevented. The prevention of one major accident, at a cost to the community of over a million dollars, where a car hits a pothole or swerves to avoid one and or loses control and has a head on, would fund the service for years.

The need for a national service with one phone number is the key to getting drivers to phone in details as they are found. With different numbers or services for each state, the likelihood of regular road users making the effort will not be as strong. Prompt action on issues raised will help increase participation, as people see that issues raised are addressed quickly.

I am seeking support for this road safety initiative and would welcome comments from interested parties along with letters of support to relay onto State Road Authorities and Commonwealth bodies.

Please contact Rod Hannifey, 15 Kensington Ave, Dubbo 2830. PH 0428120560 or email rod.hannifey@bigpond.com Thanks and Safe Travelling, Rod Hannifey.

To – Pat Matthews. West Australian Main Roads.
From – Rod Hannifey
Subject – Blue Reflector Trial

A trial of marking informal/casual parking spots has been agreed to by the R.T.A. for the section of the Newell Highway from Marsden to Coonabarabran. The aim is to provide simple signage to show these areas, more so for a driver unfamiliar with a particular road, to enable a driver who is tired, to use these spots for a short rest or sleep if needed rather than having to drive on to the next official parking bay. Often if looking for a spot to park when fatigue has come over you, these spots are only recognised when it's too late and you are all ready past them. Roadside guideposts will be fitted with 3 blue reflectors, then 2, then 1 and directly past this will be an area for use. This does not lessen the need for further improvements and or additional rest areas, but will be a valuable addition in the interim and in providing marking of spots cheaply and easily for truckies recognition and use when tired and not wishing to drive further without rest. Posters produced by the R.T.A. have been put up in roadhouses within the trial section. All industry press will be contacted to make as many drivers aware of the trial and to get as much feedback as possible.

As of the 14-12-01 the trial has been extended to North of Gilgandra. It had been from Marsden to Peak Hill. Your comments are requested on this trial with the view that should it prove worthwhile it could be extended to other highways. Main Roads Queensland has also shown interest and will be looking to input from drivers regarding this trial to justify their participation.

Please send your comments to Rod Hannifey rod.hannifey@bigpond.com
and I will be collating responses and passing them on to both the R.T.A. and Main Roads Queensland. Safe travelling,

Rod Hannifey.

If you wish to monitor or note responses and are happy to then pass them on to me that's fine or you can direct them to me at 15 Kensington Ave, Dubbo, 2830
Whichever you prefer. Thanks, Rod.

THE TRUCKIES TOP TEN TIPS **FOR SHARING THE ROAD**

1. **Please don't cut in front of trucks** approaching traffic lights or out on the highway. Allow safe road space for the trucks' size. A loaded B-Double can weigh 40 to 50 times that of the average sedan; don't risk being hit. Simple physics means trucks take more distance to stop. As a pedestrian you wouldn't step out in front of a bus, so don't do it in your car, with a truck.

2. The **"DO NOT OVERTAKE TURNING VEHICLE"** sign on the rear of vehicles over 7.5 metres in length, allows them to legally turn from the second or even the third lane as needed, to safely get round a corner. Stay back ; don't move into the blind spot to the left and rear of the truck cab. **Please Remember - IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE TRUCKDRIVER, HE CAN'T SEE YOU.**

3. **If being passed by a truck** don't allow your speed to increase, this only increases the time involved. If anything, ease up on the accelerator and by helping the truck pass safely you improve your own safety as well. A flash of the headlights tells the truckie when it's safe to move back in.

4. **Speed limiting** means no engine power above 100 km/hr, though gravity can push us faster downhill. A truck will hope to be at the legal speed limit approaching the bottom of a hill to lessen delays to all traffic, but if slow uphill or when overtaking, we are doing the best we can.

5. **Road courtesy** and a bit of patience may save your life; it could also prevent road rage. I would much rather a wave of thanks, than a shaken fist. Improved driver education and awareness of heavy vehicles, can only improve safety for all road users.

6. **Road positioning** - A truck uses all of its lane space, do not travel right on the centre line, use the road width available, to give you space between opposing traffic. If stopped or broken down, where possible park well clear of the roadway. 10 centimetres past the fog line (the unbroken line on the left) is not safe for you or your car. Use hazard lights and ensure headlights are dipped or off at night, to be able to be seen safely. Safety triangles can be a worthwhile investment.

7. **High beam glare** contributes to night driving fatigue. Dip when flashed, or before reaching a crest or curve, don't blind, then dip. Trucks mirrors are much larger and have no anti-glare position, dip early when behind trucks and when overtaking, don't move to high beam until past the trucks mirrors. Please check headlight alignment regularly, particularly if loaded up on long trips and only use fog lights in fog, they can be more of a hazard at other times.

8. **Caravans** - When being overtaken, maintain speed and position, only slow when the truck has moved out to pass. Quality mirrors, towing hitches and good advice are priceless. A CB or UHF radio can also be worthwhile. **WE FULLY SUPPORT THE IDEA AND BENEFITS OF CARAVAN** CB, UHF 18 AND CB 18 and the fitting of Caravan CB stickers on the front and rear of your van.

9. **Safe overtaking:** 1. If you are right on the back of the truck you have very little vision, stay back allowing you to see better. 2. Be sure you can see enough road to pass safely. 3. Pass quickly but sensibly. 4. Don't pull back in until you see both the trucks headlights in your rearview mirror, this allows a safe space. 5. Maintain your speed, don't pass and then slow directly in front of the truck. To take a large risk for a gain of a couple of minutes is unsafe and often unnecessary.

PLEASE, IF YOU CAN'T SEE, DON'T PASS.

10. **Roundabouts** - The "DO NOT OVERTAKE TURNING VEHICLE" sign applies, so please stay back. Larger trucks often need all of the roadway. The truck isn't racing you into the roundabout; it is trying to fit in, to avoid a much slower start and movement through, which can often further delay or stop, all traffic.

Remember, every item you buy or use is carried on a truck at sometime. Like you truckies want to get home safely to their families, so let's share the road. This Top Ten Tips is a shorter version of the National Sharing the Road with Heavy Vehicles Program, which is a more detailed explanation of these items and is available for newspaper articles, radio interviews or thirty-second community service ads, to spread education on sharing the road with trucks, with the aim of improving safety for all on the road. For further information please contact : Rod Hannifey, Road Transport and Road Safety Advocate, 0428120560 or e-mail rod.hannifey@bigpond.com Safe Travelling.

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RESPECT THE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF TRUCKS AND IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY FOR ALL.

CARAVAN SURVEY

I drive a two trailer, 25-metre B-double fuel tanker and am seeking comment from vanners on sharing the road with trucks. In my experience the most difficult situation is with a truck catching up behind a van and the van driver, believing he is doing the right thing, unnecessarily slows and moves to the left. By slowing before the truck has pulled out to overtake the van forces the truck to slow, losing its momentum and road speed, which it then has to recover before overtaking. Though moving left can sometimes reduce wind buffeting for the van, with a rough or broken road edge, it can make controlling the van more difficult and can throw up stones from this normally unused section of road. The truck will always have to cross the centre line, so move left only when conditions warrant it. I would recommend maintaining your speed and position until the truck pulls out to overtake, and if you wish to assist, only then, lift your foot gently off the accelerator, flash the truckie with your headlight flasher when its safe to move back in and then regain your travelling speed.

"Caravan CB", AM (CB) 18 and UHF 18 is now widely recognised and though unofficial (but within Australian Communication Authority Guidelines) with your van signed front and back, it provides on road communication between vanners and truckies when needed, and if used during overtaking, takes away the guess work of what each party is going to do. Caravan CB has been growing slowly now for over three years and will continue to be promoted through interested caravan clubs, parks and industry organizations and magazines along with, in the trucking industry. Truckies generally use channel 8 on AM and 40 on UHF. Emergency channels are 9 on AM and 5 on UHF (all for 40 channel sets).

The more who join in and participate in "Caravan CB", the wider the benefits will spread. Signs are available from a number of clubs or you can make your own.
FRONT – CB18 and or UHF18 as applicable. REAR – CARAVAN CB
(Minimum 100 mm high letters) CB 18 and or UHF 18 as applicable
With the option of adding your name, eg Bill and Sue, to ensure you get the right van. I'm told this is a good icebreaker in caravan parks.

With caravan speeds often limited by towing vehicle manufacturers capacities and or ratings, it is worth considering the capabilities of your combination as a whole in choosing a safe road speed. My hope would be that secure, suitable mirrors and a proper towing hitch be included, along with putting your unit over a weighbridge to ensure correct weights and weight distribution for improved safety. A CB or UHF radio should prove a valuable addition. You might consider joining a caravan club to access the experiences of others or look to caravan magazines for information or even attending a caravan clinic to see you start off with some experience, rather than learn from scratch on the road, which has seen some learn very costly lessons.

I would welcome your comments and suggestions with the aim of improving on road communication particularly between vanners and truckies and improving road safety for all road users. Please write to Rod Hannifey, 15 Kensington Ave. Dubbo, N.S.W. 2830 or email - rod.hannifey@bigpond.com Safe Travelling.

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