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**Australian Trucking Association  
Submission to:**

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Temporary Business  
Visas**

***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.

Details are available at the ATA website: [www.atatruck.net.au](http://www.atatruck.net.au).

***ATA Careers and Training Council***

The ATA Careers and Training Council (formerly the ATA Training Alliance) combines the "not for profit" industry training organizations that are developing and delivering training programs and career information for the trucking industry.

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.

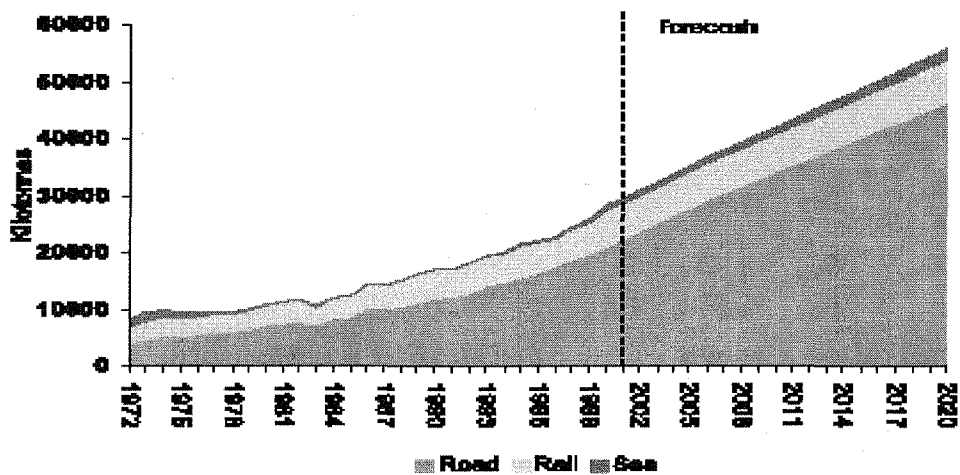
He report is available under Publications at the ATA website [www.atatruck.net.au](http://www.atatruck.net.au).

***Background***

Road freight 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.

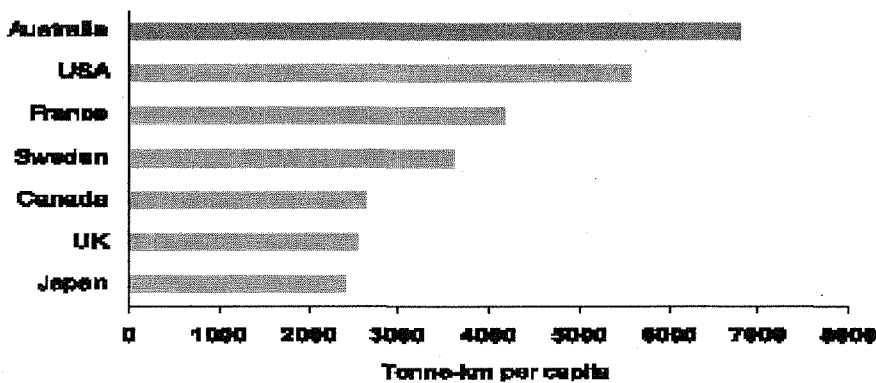
Figure 2 Non-bulk freight transported by mode 1972-2001 and projections to 2020



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.

### **Previous Submission**

In August 2005 the ATA made a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's Inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing. This submission included the following about truck drivers (with ANZSCO update):

### **Truck drivers**

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

<b>Licence</b>	<b>Time Requirements</b>
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. The ATA understands that the uptake among new entrants is increasing and is being actively encouraged.

A truck driver is given the responsibility for capital equipment that has a value often well in excess of \$250,000, apart from the value of the freight. The technological advances in vehicle design and operational requirements have 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, accreditation schemes 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 were classified as level 7 in the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO). This classification is continued in the new Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) as Unit Group 7331 Skill Level 4.

This classification 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 licensing system, training requirement encompassing vehicle operation, load restraint and fatigue management.

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

However, employers in regional areas may be eligible for regional concessions in meeting the minimum skill level requirements. The areas designated for the purpose of these regional concessions are gazetted and listed by postcode on the DIAC website. In order for an employer to qualify for these regional concessions, applications must be certified by one of the regional Certifying Bodies.

### **The Current Inquiry**

#### **Terms of Reference**

##### **Inquiry into eligibility requirements and monitoring, enforcement and reporting arrangements for temporary business visas**

1. Inquire into the adequacy of the current eligibility requirements (including English language proficiency) and the effectiveness of monitoring, enforcement and reporting arrangements for temporary business visas, particularly Temporary Business (Long Stay) 457 visas and Labour Agreements; and;
2. Identify areas where procedures can be improved.

(Adopted by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on 6 December 2006)

#### *Regional Labour Agreements*

The ATA has been negotiating with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship 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 overall shortage of truck drivers. There are also costs to employers such as providing medical insurance or meeting medical costs for employees and their dependents and meeting their travel and repatriation costs. With the addition of other expenses, such as traveling costs to Australia, temporary accommodation expenses and training and licensing charges, the ATA estimates that additional costs to employers can amount to \$10,000-\$15,000 per employee.

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.

The ATA believes that the Australian Government should now finalise this Labour agreement as soon as possible, with a view to expanding it if its operation has been positively reviewed.

#### **Recommendation:**

That the current labour agreement arrangements provide an adequate basis for the effective monitoring, enforcement and reporting arrangements for temporary business visas, particularly Temporary Business (Long Stay) 457 visas and Labour Agreements