

Beck's update

The start of this year has been exceptionally busy across both training and industry engagement. Demand for training continues to increase, with activity remaining higher than usual across all licence classes and courses. A large part of this growth has come from referrals and direct feedback from drivers and operators. That feedback matters to us and we appreciate the support from the local community.

Alongside training, I have continued my work at a government level. This has included meeting with ACT Government ministers to raise ongoing concerns around the fuel situation and the real impact it is having on operators. A key focus of these discussions has been the need for clearer, more accessible communication so industry can properly understand what actions are being taken and what support is available.

At a national level, I have taken on a new role as Secretary of the National Road Freighters Association (NRFA). The NRFA is a driver-focused association that advocates for heavy vehicle drivers across Australia. Its work centres on ensuring drivers are represented in national discussions around fatigue, compliance, working conditions, and the day-to-day realities of operating heavy vehicles. The association plays an important role in bridging the gap between policy and what is actually happening on the road.

Industry Pressures – Training Standards and Driver Capability

One of the ongoing issues across the industry remains the standard of driver training and assessment. There is still a tendency for some operators and individuals to choose training providers based purely on cost. This approach carries risk. The outcome of any licence upgrade should not just be the licence itself, but the level of skill, knowledge, and confidence the driver leaves with. The difference between providers can be significant.

There are still training organisations taking shortcuts, whether that is reducing training time, lowering assessment standards, or not fully preparing drivers for real-world conditions. This creates downstream risk not only for the driver, but for the operator and the broader industry.

With the upcoming changes to the HVNL and the implementation of the Master Code, expectations on employers are increasing. Businesses will be required to demonstrate what training has been completed, when it was completed, and that it meets an appropriate standard. Training is no longer just a one-off activity—it becomes part of a documented compliance framework.

This makes the choice of training provider more critical than ever. Poor-quality training or inadequate assessment will not stand up to scrutiny under a system that requires evidence and accountability. Operators should be asking:

- What level of training is actually being delivered?
- Is the assessment being conducted properly and to standard?
- What ongoing support, mentoring, or additional training is available?

Not all training providers operate to the same standard. It is critical that businesses and individuals are confident they are engaging providers who are delivering compliant, thorough, and professional training, not simply the fastest or cheapest option.



Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) – Key Changes Ahead

The upcoming amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law remain a central focus for the industry. With implementation expected mid-year, the reforms will introduce a stronger emphasis on:

- Safety Management Systems (SMS) as a core compliance requirement
- Greater accountability across the Chain of Responsibility (CoR)
- Alignment with the updated Master Code
- Expanded expectations for fatigue, accreditation, and risk management

These changes represent a structural shift in how compliance is demonstrated and enforced. Businesses that have not yet formalised their systems, policies, and documentation should prioritise this immediately. Remember these changes will apply to all of industry not just those who operate under an accredited system.

NHVR Industry Workshop – 27 May - The NHVR will be holding a critical industry forum on 27 May, providing direct insight into the upcoming HVNL changes and practical steps for preparation. This forum will cover:

- Detailed overview of HVNL amendments
- What operators need to implement before mid-year
- The role of the new Master Code
- How Safety Management Systems (SMS) will underpin the accreditation framework
- Future direction of access arrangements, including NSW and cross-border considerations with Transport for NSW (TfNSW)

To register follow the link: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1555494?embed>

Fuel Situation – Government Response and Industry Impact

Fuel remains one of the most significant and immediate pressures on the transport industry. Recent government measures, including the Fairer Fuel Bill, temporary removal of the Road User Charge (RUC), and the halving of fuel excise, have been positioned as support for industry. While these are important steps, the practical impact on operators is more limited than it appears.

On the surface, the reduction at the pump equates to around 26 cents per litre. In reality, this does not translate into a direct saving for most transport businesses.

- Operators with fuel levy mechanisms pass this reduction straight back to customers
- Operators without recovery mechanisms simply reduce the extent to which they are absorbing costs

When Fuel Tax Credit adjustments are factored in, the actual benefit to industry is closer to 6 cents per litre, and even that is not immediate, it is realised later through BAS. At the same time, fuel prices remain volatile, meaning any short-term reduction is quickly eroded.



The more critical issue is cash flow.

Many operators are now facing fuel accounts significantly higher than normal, with March fuel bills already falling due. In some cases, businesses are reaching the point where they are unable to continue fuelling their fleets, leading to decisions to park trucks.

Current government measures apply only moving forward and do not address costs already incurred. This has left a gap where the immediate financial pressure remains unresolved.

The NRFA has been clear that without targeted, immediate intervention, such as retrospective relief through mechanisms like the Road User Charge, operators are left carrying the burden of rapid fuel increases with limited ability to respond.

In parallel, the industry is pushing for structural reform through enforceable fuel cost recovery across the supply chain. Without this, operators, particularly small businesses and owner-drivers, continue to operate in a position where they are effectively subsidising freight costs for larger customers.

The key point for industry is this:

- Short-term government measures provide limited and delayed relief
- Immediate cash flow pressure remains the primary risk
- Long-term sustainability depends on enforceable cost recovery mechanisms

Without both short-term relief and long-term reform, there is a real risk of reduced transport capacity, business failure, and broader impacts across supply chains.

Contractual Chain Order – Fuel Cost Recovery

Recent developments at the Fair Work Commission around a draft Road Transport Contractual Chain Order are a direct response to the current fuel crisis. The draft order is designed to ensure that increases in fuel costs are passed through the contractual chain, rather than being absorbed by operators at the bottom.

This represents an important shift toward fairer cost distribution across the supply chain. For many operators, particularly owner drivers and small businesses, fuel increases have historically been difficult to recover, creating significant financial pressure. The current environment has seen operators facing sharply increased fuel accounts in a short period, with limited certainty around recovery.

While the draft order will not resolve immediate cost pressures, it establishes a pathway toward consistent and enforceable fuel cost recovery moving forward. For small to medium operators, this improves confidence in decision-making, particularly around whether it is viable to continue operating under current cost conditions, while also reinforcing the importance of understanding contractual obligations within the supply chain.

Final Note - The next few months will be significant for the industry. Many out there are feeling the pressure at the moment. If you need help, reach out. There are many support services out there and now is not the time to go at it alone. Some of the services you can reach out are Holistic Health & Safety Partners, Black Dog Institute, Lifeline Australia & Healthy Heads, Trucks & Sheds.

