



19 December 2019

Productivity Commission
Review of the Skills and Workforce Development Agreement
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Commissioners

The Australian Trucking Association would like to make this submission to the review of the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD).

The ATA and its member associations collectively represent 50,000 businesses and 200,000 people in the Australian trucking industry. Together we are committed to safety, professionalism and viability.

The background to the terms of reference for the review identify that the NASWD is a high-level agreement that identifies the long term objectives of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in the areas of skills and workforce development, and recognises the interest of all governments in ensuring the skills of the Australian people are developed and utilised in the economy. Governments have agreed that the national training system should deliver high quality, responsive, equitable and efficient training.

The ATA welcomes this review and the focus of the Productivity Commission and the Australian Government on skills and workforce development. There are two central issues effecting skills and workforce development in Australia's trucking industry.

Funding arrangements

Trucking operators experience a disconnect between the qualifications and units in the national training system that receive government funding and the skills development required for staff.

Industry requires an approach that is focused on upgrading individual skills. Some trucking operators report, especially for smaller businesses, that access to the particular units of competency that would upskill staff is restricted by lack of funding. Where funding is often tied to a particular qualification, the needs of industry in terms of skills and available time is on obtaining individual units of competency. Where funding is not available, registered training organisations are unlikely to develop course material.

The Commission should consider the funding arrangements for the national training system and how that impacts the skills training options available to industry. Reform should seek to broaden the accessibility of skills training and individual units of competency that are available to industry.

Quality of training

The Issues Paper states that the Joyce Review identified that the quality of training is variable. This is of particular importance in the trucking industry.

In evidence to the Senate inquiry into aspects of road safety in Australia, the ATA raised significant concerns with the quality and consistency in training and assessment of heavy vehicle drivers. Whilst there are many excellent trainers, others train to a price and can be more focused on how long a course will take, and not on the level of competency attained. This contributes to a highly variable quality of training and assessment of truck drivers. Operators are particularly concerned about the variable quality of training in chain of responsibility, load restraint, fatigue management and work health and safety.

After strong advocacy by the ATA and the industry, Austroads conducted a review of the heavy vehicle competency framework which was released in May 2018.¹ The review confirmed that the current truck driver licensing system is inadequate.

For example, the review assessed the heavy rigid licensing unit (TLILIC2016) against ten safety risks that the review team identified. They found that the unit failed to address six out of the ten safety risks and only partly addressed the other four.

In September 2019, Austroads announced that it is considering:

- strengthening the licence to drive units of competency
- developing standardised training and assessment material
- considering minimum supervised hours of experience as part of heavy vehicle licensing.²

While the ATA welcomes this process, it shows that there has been no improvement in the truck driver licensing system and that the process for reform is slow. The review of the heavy vehicle driver competency framework and licensing arrangements should be completed and the results implemented as a priority.

The ATA contact for this submission is Samuel Marks, Transport and Infrastructure Adviser,

Yours sincerely

Ben Maguire
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Oswin, J and G Cotton. [Review of the national heavy vehicle driver competency framework](#). Austroads report AP-R564-18. May 2018.

² Austroads. [Review of the national framework for heavy vehicle driver competency – phase 2](#). 9 September 2019.