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Road Safety Committee

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15th October 2007

The Executive Officer
Road Safety Committee
Level 8, 35 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO RAIL CROSSING SAFETY

Further to the call for submissions on the above inquiry, the Victorian Transport Association (VTA) is pleased to provide the attached submission.

The VTA is an active member of the Transport Industry Safety Group (TISG) and I have the pleasure of being the current Co-Chairman.

Over the past 10 years the TISG has actively promoted heavy vehicle safety through developing a large number of safety initiatives.

The VTA strongly supports the work of your committee in identifying initiatives to improve railway crossing safety.

I would be pleased to discuss this submission with the committee.

Yours sincerely

MR PHILIP LOVEL AM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
VICTORIAN TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Road Safety Committee

Inquiry into Improving Safety at Rail Crossings

Prepared by

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1st October 2007

Submission to:

Road Safety Committee

“Improving Safety at Level Crossings”

The Victorian Transport Association is pleased to make this submission to the above inquiry.

The VTA and its membership profile are identified in attachment (1). We have specific membership involved in rail such as QR National and Pacific National and many rail freight forwarders. We also have as members the hundreds of transport operators with a strong interest in improving the safety at railway crossings.

We as an association welcome this inquiry and will make some specific comments on train and truck safety that will hopefully assist in minimising train/truck accidents into the future.

Attachment 2 is an overview of the industry.

For your information in September 2007 the VTA hosted a major safety session during Freight Week to develop & agree on a set of industry codes to address road & workplace safety. These two codes were workshopped with over 120 industry transport & driver representatives. The Transport Workers Union was a major participant in this process.

Two draft codes were discussed and refinements are currently underway. The drafts are attached to this submission – we expect final sign off by the end of 2007. Although not directly relating to rail crossing safety the Codes of Conduct will have a impact on safety across the industry.

Road Safety and the Transport Industry

Since 1989, there has been a steady decline in fatal crashes involving heavy vehicles in Victoria. In 1989, 124 road users died in truck involved crashes and in 2006, 44 deaths.

Key Facts about Heavy Vehicle Crashes:

- Around 1000 heavy vehicle involved crashes occur each year in Victoria
- Heavy vehicle involved crashes account for around 14% of the road toll in 2006
- There is around 3 times more chance of a truck involved crash being fatal compare to light vehicles being involved
- It is estimated that heavy vehicle crashes cost \$2 billion per year in Australia

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- MUARC reports that USA & UK have significantly lower heavy vehicle crash rates than Australian heavy vehicles. This could be caused by the different operating environments and road types eg more freeways in USA.
 - Coroners findings' indicate that the other road user is at fault in around 70% of fatal heavy vehicle crashes (Austroads & ATSB)
 - Recent research conducted in the USA on the causes of truck crashes highlighted two major contributing factors:
 - Recognition – driver did not recognise the situation by not paying proper attention, was distracted by something inside or outside the vehicle, or failed to adequately observe the situation:
 - Decision – driver drove too fast for conditions, misjudged the speed of other vehicles, followed other vehicles too closely, or made false assumptions about other driver's actions.

Train/Truck Crashes

- CrashStats shows that in the 5 years 2001 to 2005 there were on average around 2 to 3 crashes a year involving trucks hitting trains. Although small in number, unfortunately there is a high risk of death or serious injury when a train and a truck do collide.
- Tragically, there have been a number of recent fatal crashes involving trains hitting trucks. In some cases there is no one cause – for example – the Australian Transport Safety Bureau findings in the 2006 Lismore crash was that a number of factors contributed to the crash including fog, the speed of the truck, and the crossing signage & sight distances were not up to standard.
- The safety record of the bigger trucks is very good compared to the rest of the heavy vehicle fleet. NTI insurance quote that B Doubles have 16% accidents for 39% of the tonne/kilometres travelled compared to semi trailers with 61% of accidents for 46% tonne/kilometres travelled.
- A recent ATSB report 2006/015 indicated that a timing trial for high mass combination vehicles traversing the Fountain Head Road railway level crossing at Ban Springs in Northern Territory (site of crash) revealed that the procedure used by the authorities to calculate and assess level crossing sighting distances was probably inadequate for high mass combination vehicles to traverse a level crossing. As sight distances was an issue at Lismore, the VTA considers that sight distances needs to be investigate in Victoria at uncontrolled crossings.
- A recent ARA report suggests major problems for road users at railway level crossings appear to be:
 - Complacency – associated with attributions (beliefs & knowledge) about the road transport network, rail movements & train capabilities, and the timing & operation of railway crossing signals: and

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- Late detection of hazard – arising from lapses or errors, and is the most critical problem faced by a road user. Without detection there can be no processing of information, and no decision process as to the most appropriate response.

Heavy Vehicle Initiatives

Transport Industry Safety Group

The TISG is made up of VicRoads, VTA, TWU, TAC, Victoria Police, ARTSA, the Bus Association, ARRB and has the Victorian State Coroner as an observer. The TISG aims to identify transport related safety issues & develop safety initiatives.

Recent initiatives include:

- Buying a Safer Truck DVD & brochure to encourage the up take of vehicle safety features (attached)
- The Transport Safety Pack – road safety DVD containing safety fact sheets, videos & brochures to assist training programs (attached)
- DVD on Implementing a Fatigue Management System (attached)
- DVD on Implementing a Drug and Alcohol Policy (attached)
- Buying a Safer Heavy Trailer brochure to encourage the take up of safety technology on trailers (attached)
- OH & S Guide for the Transport Industry (attached)
- Pilot to introduce Drug Policies & testing in transport companies
- Annual TWU Safety Day in July
- Fatigue & Drugs and Driving publication (attached)
- The VTA has been conducting safety forums with the transport industry across Victoria

The VTA is developing a campaign targeting both transport companies & drivers about the dangers of driver distraction. The campaign will encourage transport operators to adopt "Safe Systems" to communicate with drivers while driving. The campaign can link to the TAC's "Distracted Drivers are Dangerous" campaign and will be developed by the end of 2007.

New and Developing Technologies to Improve Safety at Level Crossings

The following is a summary of safety technology relevant to the transport industry that has the potential to improve the safety of heavy vehicles, drivers or the transport company operations and practices. All these could impact on level crossing safety.

In Vehicle Technology

The transport industries (main players) are quickly adopting new technology including:

- Fitting of Electronic Braking Systems on trailers which provide ABS, load sensing & roll stability. The fitting of EBS on trucks would dramatically improve truck braking distances, roll stability and overall control of the truck during heavy braking.
- ISA on a truck is being trialed by a VTA member
- Toll is fitting Optalert fatigue monitoring equipment to some of its vehicles
- Linfox is installing tachographs into its fleet that:
 - Operate from a driver "smart" card
 - Provide data on driving hours
 - Provide vehicle speeds

The data stored in the tachograph can be downloaded by the police or a print out can be produced.

GPS Tracking

Many transport companies have GPS tracking & monitoring of vehicle speed (over 100kn/h), fatigue breaks & location of the vehicle.

Best practice companies use this as a safety tool. As an example, Toll has a "three strikes and you are out" policy if their tanker drivers exceed 100 km/h. The use of GPS tracking to alert the driver that they are approaching a railway crossing is possibly available on some GPS systems. GPS is also used by some companies to monitor fatigue rest breaks.

Safe-T-Cam

New South Wales and South Australia now operate the Safe -T-Cam system; South Australia recently installed 11 sites at a reported cost of \$1.8m. Reports from VTA members indicate that the Safe-T-Cam system has driven the "cowboys" from the routes with Safety-T-Cam.

Redflex (speed camera supplier) reports that Point to Point cameras could be linked to the Safe-T-Cam system as a way of providing heavy vehicle speed and fatigue data from NSW & South Australia. The use of the Safe-T-Cam System would help remove fatigued and speeding drivers from potential crashes with trains.

Drugs & Alcohol

Around one in 50 truck drivers drug tested is currently affected by illicit drugs. The introduction of drug policies with a drug testing process should be encouraged in transport companies. Best practice companies such as Linfox have random testing, testing when an incident occurs and testing when there is suspicion that an employee is affected by drugs.

Drug and alcohol testing technology used by transport operators a part of a company Drug Policy is seen as best practice when it is combined with consultation, education and support for employees affected by drugs.

VTA Suggested Solutions

There could be many solutions to addressing rail crossing accidents. The VTA has no resources for research, but suggests practical solutions that would be cost effective and almost immediate. Some of the solutions are non technology based but worthy of consideration by the committee.

Proposal (1)

Reduce speed in the vicinity of railway crossings on rural roads to 20kph under the posted legal speed limit for speed limits above 70km/h similar to school crossings but with a 24 hour/7 day implementation (fixed speed signs).

Proposal (2)

The swift introduction of the latest safety technology into new trucks and trailers has the potential to dramatically reduce heavy vehicle crashes. This is especially relevant for incidents such as Kerang and the Burnley Tunnel where high speed braking was involved. The Australian Design Rules need to incorporate the latest technology such as Electronic Stability Control and/or Electronic Braking Systems.

Proposal (3)

Develop a major information pamphlet for all truck drivers setting out the issues to watch for with railway crossings. This could cover:-

- Distraction from mobile equipment, radio or other communication equipment
- The human factors such as complacency, speed perception and looming, change blindness, "looked but failed to see" and/or inability to determine location of approaching hazard.

This issue is not only about railway crossings but also about trucks sharing the road with other motorists and the general responsibility of driving safely

Proposal (4)

The VTA asks the inquiry to examine the issue of sight distances at uncontrolled crossings in the Victorian in light of the findings of the Lismore crash and the recent introduction of higher speed trains on rural rail lines.

Proposal (5)

Distraction – both in-car/truck distraction & external-to-the-car/truck are significant causes of crashes, in some cases the railway crossing itself can cause distraction.

Transport companies must ensure that the workplace (including vehicles) provides a safe environment for work. Companies also need to recognise the need to make sure in-vehicle technology does not provide additional distractions that further complicate the driving task.

To minimise the risks of driver distraction and misjudgement, instruments that are clearly legible, easy to understand and within reach will enable the driver to drive more effectively. It is also advisable that such devices only display information at those times it is required, that is they are blank or silent when not required.

The location of the vehicle controls can affect the ease with which instrument displays and controls can be viewed and responded to. Ideally controls and switches should be located high on the dashboard, not between the front seats, thereby minimising amount of time a driver glances away from the road.

If the vehicle needs to also be fitted with devices such as mobile phones, GPS navigational systems, transponders and Personal Digital Assistants (PDA), it is essential that the devices are properly located to help avoid driver distraction – but companies with a focus on safety will have “safe systems” in place to reduce or ideally remove the risk of distraction.

Ideally, the federal government (who control the ADRs) and the vehicle manufacturers would play a stronger role in building vehicles that minimise the risk of distraction.

Proposal (6)

The transport industry to adopt a risk plan for all trips involving transversing railway crossings - this would require all companies involved with trucking to discuss with their operations & driving staff how many and what locations railway crossings exist.

Most freight is mostly repetitious – that is, trips are similar every day, every week, every year – it is rare that road freight operates on new routes or roads every trip. Specialised freight vehicles such as over dimensional loads & cranes always have their routes & timetables well under consideration before they leave on their trip

Proposal (7)

That the Safe-T-Cam system be introduced in Victoria to reduce the number of speeding and fatigued heavy vehicle drivers on key routes throughout Victoria.

Proposal (8)

That Drug and Alcohol policies in transport companies be made compulsory as in New South Wales. Drug and alcohol testing technology used by transport operators as part of a company Drug and Alcohol Policy combined with consultation, education and support for employees affected by drugs is an effective initiative for reducing drug related crashes.

Proposal (9)

The VTA supports the use of targeted enforcement to deter road users committing offences at railway crossing. The use of safety cameras at crossing is encouraged for both enforcement and research purposes. The use of lower cost safety cameras could be explored for the large number of rural locations.

Proposal (10)

The VTA is aware that VicTrack have been testing a low cost railway crossing warning system for many years. The VTA supports the introduction of effective low cost treatments of railway crossings as a matter of urgency.

Attachment 1

VICTORIAN TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (Inc) PROFILE

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA), a privately funded, non-profit organisation with over 105 years of service to the Freight and Logistics Industry, It is recognised as Australia's pre-eminent multimodal contractor and employer organisation in this Sector.

Operating across the entire freight logistics spectrum, the VTA enjoys established working relationships and interface with all levels of Government, Industry and Unions.

As an experienced and influential industry body, the VTA is represented on key Authority and Industry organisations such as the Victorian Road Freight Advisory Council, the Victorian freight and Logistics Council, the newly formed Transport Council for Owner/Driver legislation, the Australian Trucking Association and the Victorian Congress of Employer Association as well as a host of committees, representative bodies and interest groups.

Significant safety groups include the Transport Industry Safety Group, the Victorian Enforcement Liaison Committee and the Industry Round Table.

Dedicated to partnering members in all sectors of the transport and logistics industry, the VTA has over 750 members. It represents most major national freight and Logistic companies and hundreds of smaller specialist Companies. It also now represents over \$100 Billion of Customer revenue from the top 100 Australian Companies from Manufacturing, Retailing and supplier companies through its Logistic Managers group.

What does all this mean for the industry and our members?

The VTA's industry role lies in influencing, communicating and responding to the challenges of industry and of business in general. In fulfilling this role the VTA accesses an extensive industry network.

Support to the industry comprises a mix of high level industry specific training & consulting, extensive professional and management advice, facilitating interchange of information, experience and contacts through major industry events, briefings and focus meetings, and representation on a variety of panels, committees and councils.

Active at the international, national and local levels, across road, rail, sea and air and Customer base, the VTA sees its role as influencing, communicating and responding to prevalent challenges, both of the industry specifically and of business in general.

What are issues that the VTA looks at?

Technology, road and infrastructure development and funding, environmental issues, politics at the local, state and federal level, law enforcement, industrial relations,

occupational health & safety, day to day operating problems etc. – In essence, anything and everything that currently affects the freight and logistics industry; not to mention future challenges and developments.

The VTA is a platform from which its members can ascertain, address and appraise themselves of the range of issues facing the industry – both current and future and be confident their association is working at practical outcomes for the whole sector.– How have we worked to influence and drive the freight agenda?

VTA engages in an ongoing and varied assortment of lobbying activities and negotiations, conducted on behalf of all those who operate in the industry.

We meet with elected leaders and representatives and attend forums, breakfasts and briefings on Government policy – and we ask the hard questions!

VTA holds, sits on, chairs and hosts an equally wide variety of committees, representational and working groups.

VTA are constantly active in producing papers and keeping the industry informed. In the past year we have produced: a draft employee application form; a smoking policy; insurance guidelines and FSRA legislation; and industrial relations updates.

VTA have been active in meeting with; the Municipal Association of Victoria; VicRoads; the Trades Hall Council; TWU; SEITA; CityLink / Transurban; DP World; WorkCover; ATA; and the Federal Department of Industrial Relations.

VTA has developed a response paper on the Effective Life of Trucks tax provisions that could have cost the industry millions, and have twice succeeded in having the decision reviewed and changed. And the VTA has developed, pushed and lobbied on issues such as the Workcover Premium Review, road funding, OH&S, rest areas and Owner Driver legislation.

VTA takes pride in setting the industry direction, in responding to policy issues, in driving the agenda and in maintaining an industry voice at the forefront of the debate.

Information supplied by
Mr Philip N Lovel AM
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Transport Association.
Monday 15th October 2007

Overview of industry

Attachment 2

- It is estimated that the freight task will double by 2020 (NTC)
- The Freight & Logistics industry is a \$60 billion business
- Most of the urban task performed by non transport companies – Coles, Woolworths & Australia Post are the biggest transporters of goods
- 80% of all road freight moves less than 100km – average length of road haul is 86km
- Interstate road freight is only around 7% of the total freight moved
- 96% of urban freight moves by road – no mode alternative – economically or physically
- Consolidation of companies and sectors is taking place eg Toll owns Patrick, Pacific Rail, Virgin, shipping
- Growth of freight – depends on sector eg Port of Melbourne 14% increase in 2005
- Growth mainly in urban freight matching population growth
- Exports & imports increasing – local manufacturing decreasing

What is a Best Practice Transport Company?

- 24/7 operation
- Operate under Company Compliance Manual, which operates as a “Code of Conduct”. The manual details safety rules & standards, Chain of Responsibility, forklift operations, incident procedures etc.
- GPS tracking & monitoring of vehicle speed (over 100km/h), fatigue breaks & location
- Accredited under NHVAS for mass & maintenance
- “Motel” rooms in complex & on route for drivers to sleep in
- Training facilities
- Strict drug & alcohol policy with testing procedures
- Operate different truck types to suit the route
- Maximise truck usage/kilometres travelled
- “Image” important